

several trade names; and whenever possible to suggest the use of U. S. P. or N. F. preparations by contacting our physicians.

In a National, State or Municipal hospital I am aware that it may be possible to limit the number of items to be used, because such institutions, as a rule, are not so dependent on the goodwill of the medical profession.

Personally I feel that a patient entering a hospital for medical treatment, is entitled to any preparation, however rare or expensive, that the physician may prescribe. The patient expects the best service that the physician and hospital can give and rarely have I heard a complaint from a patient regarding the medical charge. It is much easier to prepare a lot of stock prescriptions to be handed out by number, but, to my way of thinking, extemporaneous prescriptions are far more interesting. They require more professional ability, give the physician a greater latitude in the choice of medication, and probably increase the revenue of the hospital.

In my opinion the lot of a hospital pharmacist is one of great responsibility. He must be conscientious, accurate, alert and faithful, never failing to remember that many lives are in his hands.

IF THEY ONLY WOULD!*

BY CLARENCE M. BROWN.¹

If all proprietors or managers of drug stores would only give as much time and care to the selection of employees as they do to the selection of a new line of merchandise or to store fixtures, time and money would be saved and the volume of business increased. A poor employee is a liability. The old method of figuring profit on cost has been discarded long ago. It is time now to discard the trial method of hiring employees; to know the possibilities of a man before hiring him. In buying a yard of cloth, one expects to receive a full thirty-six inches; therefore why not measure the man we expect to employ? There are methods for measuring capacity and ability; some are psychological, others are physical in nature.

Physical measurements are older than the psychological. They were fundamental to the homes of our forefathers. The eldest son was either taught the trade of his father, or was apprenticed to another tradesman for training. During the training period he received little or no payment other than his "keep." After a certain trial period he was accepted as an employee or rejected as being unfit for that particular trade. To-day the applicant for a position is given a brief trial period at some particular type of work, lasting from a few days to a week or month. Whether or not the applicant is aware that he is on trial, he often finds himself apparently dismissed without warning, because he has been found lacking in ability to fill the position in a satisfactory manner and two people have suffered loss—the prospective employer and employee. For janitorial work the trial test period (physical test) is perhaps the only satisfactory means for determining fitness of the applicant.

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For clerical and sales positions, physical tests are impractical to say the least. In the past, such tests, either with or without "recommendations," have been practically the only available means of judging ability. Yet to find a person incompetent after a lapse of even a month is a waste of both time and money; psychology, therefore, has been called to the aid of industry in providing means for measuring with a degree of accuracy the capacity for selling.

No individual can do all things equally well, however nearly he may seem to do so. There is always some one thing that is done better or more easily than anything else. There is an innate capacity to do that thing exceedingly well. Capacity is not ability. Psychologically these terms differ. Capacity limits ability. Training will increase ability but not capacity—hence ability may vary from day to day or from hour to hour, but capacity has a maximum development beyond which it cannot go. Therefore, one's capacity to do a certain type of work is limited, but one's ability to do more work of a definite type or to do it in a better way may be increased by training or by previous experience.

Some individuals will never be good salesmen, but will be excellent registered pharmacists or laboratory technicians. Others may be both salesmen and registered pharmacists, but are not equally good in both positions, although to casual observation they may seem to be so.

Pharmacists, as a rule, employ help by the usual method of depending upon letters of application, letters of recommendation, upon personal interviews or after they have "read character" from appearance of the applicant's handwriting or what not. So firm a hold has character reading upon certain individuals that no amount of argument could possibly weaken their faith in their own ability at judging people from appearance. If each of the three components upon which judgment is based is held up to the cold light of reason, each will be found to be wanting in dependability.

I. The letter of application, if lengthy, is really more or less a flattering autobiography—all the good points and none of the bad. If the letter is brief, then it serves merely as a means of introduction between applicant and prospective employer. Much has been said in school and out regarding character as revealed by the letter of application and that it therefore should be in one's own handwriting. It was considered a definite proof of carelessness if not all i's were dotted, not all t's crossed and all letters not of a corresponding height and slant. Many tests¹ given college students have proved that there is no scientific basis for assuming that an individual's handwriting discloses his capacity for work. Neither is there any real basis for judging character in this manner. If character were so disclosed, many of us would be beyond the pale of respectability. Dr. A. T. Poffenberger² claims the validity of estimation of character from letters of application is only about twenty per cent better than can be estimated by chance. However, the fact that a neat letter of application produces a pleasant first impression upon the reader must not be overlooked. First impressions are, however, often wrong in regard to true traits of character and ability.

II. The letter of recommendation is also a help in judging an applicant, but not to the extent that some pharmacists believe. Such letters are usually written

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² Psychology of Selecting Employees, Laird.

by friends. Naturally only the best qualities of the applicant are mentioned. Unless the prospective employer is acquainted with the writers, such letters are apt to be rather inaccurate as to facts. If written by former employers, and especially if the writers are known, more dependence can be placed in them since a truer picture of the capacity and ability of the individual is usually given as a matter of confidence.

III. In granting a personal interview it should be remembered that in judging an individual for the six most necessary characteristics for success; namely, common sense, energy, initiative, leadership, reliability and general ability,² judges agree among themselves to only 21% more accuracy than would be indicated by mere chance. The personal interview, then, depends to a great extent upon the interviewer or judge. A single characteristic may cause a favorable reaction upon one employer but an unfavorable one upon another. Do not feel too certain of the infallibility of your own ability to "size up" an individual. An interesting experiment was conducted by Prof. D. A. Laird¹ in which "Twelve sales managers with considerable experience in selecting representatives by personal interviews took part. Each manager interviewed the same fifty-seven candidates and ranked them from one to fifty-seven. The candidate that was ranked one by one manager was ranked fifty-third by another and fifty-seventh by still another. In no case was there any agreement as to the ranking of any single candidate."

Another interesting experiment is reported by Dr. Walter D. Scott¹ in which a number of employed salesmen were interviewed without knowledge of their productive record. Later the rankings of these men as given by the interviewers were compared with that as shown by their productive records. Only one of the interviewers succeeded in placing the best salesman in the same position of rank as given by his productive record.

These experiments would tend to show that the interview while helpful in judging personal appearance, speech and general impression of an applicant, does not give an accurate estimation of capacity for doing the job well. These first impressions as obtained by interviews are desirable in a salesman, as his ability to make a good impression on the customer is advantageous. But first impressions are not enough. Other characteristics should be discovered to indicate capacity. To be able to decide that Jones has the capacity for making a good salesman after due training is far more important than to hire him simply because he looks like the best man. Interviews alone should not be the sole means of judgment but if well planned are of value in the speed with which many applicants can be temporarily classified.

Before employing an applicant a well-planned interview should establish something concerning the applicant's family history, his educational background and his social habits, as well as his personality and physique.

There must be no home conditions that would tend toward a mental fog or confusion between attention to work and marital troubles. Heavy indebtedness or a large number of dependents are trouble makers. To have parents who have had the advantages of an education or if lacking an education themselves have been in sympathy with his educational efforts, is a decided help to an individual in the development of a correct attitude toward employment and employer. An appli-

¹ Psychology of Selecting Employees, Laird, McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1936.

cant whose father has been employed for a long period of time by one firm is very apt to dread unemployment himself and also to understand that every position has its disadvantages.

The social habits have made or broken many men. To live socially within one's means is indicative of honesty. There should be no indication of strong anti-social or political tendencies that might lead to difficulty with customers or other employees. To be well informed upon current events points toward leisure time well spent in reading and in social contacts.

To have established some or all of the above facts concerning an applicant has given value to the personal interview, but has not established the capacity of the individual for the position. The facts obtained by the interview should be noted for comparison with those obtained from interviews with other applicants. It is well to have a typed interview form to be checked, unobserved if possible, during the interview. Facts are easily forgotten or confused after several interviews.

A second interview should be arranged with each applicant within a very short period of time. Each should be told frankly that others have applied and that a little time will be needed to decide matters, and that in the meantime he too can decide whether or not he will be satisfied with the salary and conditions specified. If the plan is to use some of the modern psychological tests to determine "capacity," then before dismissing the applicant he should be taken on a brief inspection trip through the store. Locations of various classes of merchandise should be pointed out. He should be introduced to those who may be future co-workers. The purpose of all this is to see the reactions of the applicant and of the other employees. Does he seem to understand what is being told him? Was he friendly toward those he met? What were the reactions toward him?

At the second interview the selective process can be carried still further. At this time it can be explained to the applicant by way of introduction to a written test that will follow that the ability to think quickly and logically and to work rapidly and carefully are necessary qualifications for a good drug clerk. These statements should be made in such a manner as not to cause excitement.

These written tests are psychological in character and are so devised as to measure the capacity of an individual for certain types of work. They are standardized and copyrighted and must therefore be purchased from the proper sources. For this reason only the objective of each set of papers is given here. These copyrighted tests are of two types:

(A) General Capacities

- 1—Intelligence
- 2—Good judgment in various social positions
- 3—Recognition of mental states from facial expressions
- 4—Memory for names and faces
- 5—Close observation
- 6—Social information
- 7—Fundamental mathematics involved in the making of change and in the selling of merchandise.

(B) Specialized

- 1—General clerical; spelling, grammar, filing, etc.
- 2—Various others which are industrial in character.

To many pharmacists this method of employing will seem to be unnecessary and even foolish. If this be true, why then do the employment offices of many of the larger department stores and manufacturing concerns use it? Is it not true that the usual "trial" method of hiring drug store help has too often resulted in loss of time and money?

For the very small neighborhood store such a lengthy procedure of selection may be unnecessary. In such a store, closer personal observation by the proprietor is possible. Too frequent changing of clerks is bad for any store or business. Drug clerks usually quit their job for the following reasons:

(A) Better offers elsewhere

- 1—Better hours
- 2—Larger salary
- 3—Better working conditions

(B) Misfits

- 1—Accepted position because they could not get anything else at the time
- 2—Mistaken in thinking they would like the drug business
- 3—Lazy—"too much work"
- 4—Are not lazy but have no capacity for salesmanship.

Employers should realize that no one man can be expected to do the work of two and be content in doing it. No one likes to be forced to work twelve to fourteen hours on Sunday, without time for lunch or dinner. No one likes to be relieved at six-thirty or seven, when he is supposed to leave at six. No one likes to replenish stock and trim windows on Sunday, even though one is on duty. On this day one should not be required to do more than wait on patrons or make out necessary reports or orders. This is also true of evening work. Every clerk should be given some time for reading of trade journals when not actually busy in waiting upon customers.

On the other hand, employees should realize and be told that they too are expected to be prompt when reporting for work; that they are expected to keep the store clean and neat; that they are expected to keep the stock in condition and not neglect to order items when low. Every employer has a right to expect his help to keep themselves physically fit. Every salesman should seek information from every possible source concerning the merchandise he is selling. Moreover he should be well informed upon the latest medical advancements.

In summary it can be said that no one can be happy trying to do something which is unnecessary and therefore distasteful; no one can be happy doing work for which he has no capacity; and no amount of training will overcome lack of capacity. Therefore, since capacity is a very fundamental requirement for any position, why not test for it? If they only would!

LIST COAL-TAR COLORS SUITABLE FOR USE IN FOODS, DRUGS AND COSMETICS.

The Secretary of Agriculture has promulgated regulations under the new Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act listing more than a hundred coal-tar colors and providing for certification of batches of these colors as harmless and suitable for use in foods, drugs and cosmetics. The regulations are based upon evidence which was submitted at public hearings in February, became effective immediately upon their publication in the Federal Register on May 9th, and can be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. The price of a single copy is 10 cents.