

# The Executive Whirl

T.S.Nagarajan\*

*I am particularly proud of this article. It was published in 1967 and received a lot of notice. One or two international management journals did me the honour of having it reproduced. I find much of the management jargon still topical." - Author*

“Excuse me, sir, which organization do you represent?”

It was the man on my right, a prosperous looking individual in a three-piece suite and horn-rimmed glasses.

“I am in the soap trade; sales, you know,” I replied a little apologetically. Somehow I am a little ashamed of my vocation.

“You mean marketing, sir, surely?”

“It’s the same thing, isn’t it? Selling, marketing - old wine in new bottles?”

“It is not the same thing, sir. Selling is merely the operation, but marketing is the concept as a whole; it includes promotion, advertising, merchandising the lot. And let me assure you, sir,” he added with ponderous seriousness, “It is better to have attempted to market a product and failed than to have merely sold it.”

Happily the mulligatawny soup arrived and we attacked it with gusto.

This was at a lunch given by one of those management associations of which there seem to be a great number these days. I hadn’t particularly wanted to go, but my boss had ordered me to.

“You must keep in touch with the latest trends, my dear fellow,” he said, taking himself

off to put in some practice for the Merchants’ Cup golf competition.

“What is the policy of your organization, sir? My neighbor at the lunch table asked.

“Policy? To make more profits, I suppose.”

“That, sir, would be your objective,” he interposed. “Policy is an agreed line of day-to-day action aimed at the fulfillment of a long-term objective.’ Having got it off his chest he gulped down a glass of water.

“Rather clever, that,” I said. “Mind if I write it down? Bit of your own, eh?”

He turned towards me frigidly. “Those, sir, are the words of Prof.Moriarty, the famous management expert.”

“How do you interview candidates for recruitment, sir? Is it through group discussions, role-playing, psychiatric tests or what?”

“Oh, we don’t have anything so elaborate. We just call the candidate in and have a chat with him about things in general – cricket, his interest and what-have-you.”

A studied silence saved by the arrival of a fried becti.

Taking all the tartar sauce placed between us he continued:

\* T.S.Nagarajn, retired Managing Director of Brooke Bond India, has been associated with Management Education in India and has served as visiting faculty at both Institutes of Management, Ahmedabad and Calcutta. Courtesy: Sapna Book House, Bangalore.



“What induction programme do you have?”

“Induction? We pay well to induce people to stay with us.”

“That, sir, is motivation, not induction.”

I tackled my beekti hastily. What was wrong with it today? It was turning to cinders in my mouth.

”Do you have management accounting in your organization, sir?”

“Ha, ha, you are a funny one! Don’t tell me that they have applied Parkinson’s Law so much that they have to account for their managers. Not in my firm, we count them as they come in.”

I thought I had been rather smart.

“It is not funny, sir, and please refrain from digging me in the ribs with your elbow. It is painful. Management Accounting is a recent concept. It is the comparison of promise with performance.”

“What tax avoidance measures do you adopt, sir?”

“Now look here, sir, don’t get wrong. We are not that kind of a company. We pay our taxes.”

“Tax avoidance, sir,” said he, as though he were speaking to a mentally retarded child, “is a perfectly legitimate business operation. Perhaps you are referring to tax evasion, which is quite another kettle of fish... I take it you have proper delegation in your organization?”

“Yes, plenty of it. Everyone delegates everything to me.”

I felt I had to ask him something. “What do you do for a living, sir” I asked meekly.

“I do not do anything for a living, as you put it. My services are retained by several organizations as a management consultant.”

“Cushy job, what?”

He turned in his seat, adjusted his glasses, stared at me for a minute with concentrated loathing and turned his back on me.

The next thing I knew was that he was holding forth to the harassed-looking person on his right. “Operational research, sir, has nothing to do with surgery...”

