

*An approach using the basic dimensions
of responsibility to formulate . . .*

Job Descriptions for Executives

*. . . has important applications to
the problems of top management.*

By John K. Hemphill

A good method of describing executive jobs should help management in a number of ways. It would:

- Be useful in defining the area of an executive's activity and responsibility.
- Aid in establishing an objective basis for appraising a manager's performance.
- Provide a rational basis for paying different salaries.
- Serve as a valuable guide in the development of management ability.

Encouraged by these incentives, many people and organizations have spent a great amount of time trying to work out a suitable method of position description. Success has not come easily, however. For example, efforts have been made to build on the techniques of job analysis and description used in rating hourly paid jobs. But these procedures have not proved to be very adaptable at the management level.

Again, considerable research has been put into the development of lists of personality traits needed in executive jobs, and the findings have usually interested businessmen. But I know of little evidence that the data have been actually used with any success. Similar criticisms might be leveled at most psychological tests and appraisal procedures.

The result is that we still have little depend-

able knowledge about executive work. We say that this is a "top-management job" while that is a "selling job." We say that this is a job with "wide scope" while that is a job for a "figure man." And our means of communication could scarcely be more imprecise. Confusion and misunderstanding result. It is no wonder that many businessmen are looking around for a better way of talking and thinking about executive jobs.

In this article I shall report on a new approach that is designed to meet the need. This approach has been worked out by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) with the help of a number of companies — especially American Telephone & Telegraph Company, Westinghouse Electric Corporation, Diamond Gardner Corporation, American Brake Shoe Company, and Standard Oil Company (Ohio).

Using this approach we will take quite a different tack from that used under any other system. We will not be concerned with prescriptions for the proper amounts of responsibility, power, authority, personality, and so on. We will not be concerned with what executives should do or with what they should be. Instead, we will concentrate simply on the dimensions of a job. We will look mainly at the different ways in which it should be measured if it is to be compared accurately with other jobs.

Just as a carpenter compares two tables by measuring their height, length, and width; just as an engineer compares the requirements for

two bridges by measuring stress, weight, span, etc.; just as a doctor compares the health of two people on the basis of measurements of pulse, circulation, weight, reaction, etc. — so in this article we will focus on the dimensions that should be examined in comparing Jones's job with Smith's. Our concern will be more with what to measure than with the measurements themselves. This is the important first step in job description.

In some ways this may seem like a less ambitious undertaking than what has been attempted by other systems. We are not trying to go all the way in one research project and produce a comprehensive formula or set of specifications. However, the Educational Testing Service approach does have certain merits and characteristics that are important. It can be used objectively. It reveals common characteristics between and among positions and provides a measure of the *degree* to which each characteristic is a part of the position. It applies to a large range of jobs and its coverage of them is complete. It can be used by management to reveal unrecognized differences among positions as well as similarities. And it can help meet all the needs that job descriptions are intended to serve.

Describing a Position

An adequate description method for executive positions needs to provide for their complexity and flexibility. Such positions are not well described by a catalogue of activities or long lists of specific responsibilities. Executive positions must be considered broadly to include those less tangible job characteristics such as personal demands and social restrictions, all of which are part of the job.

One good way of looking at executive jobs is to consider them as made up of "position elements," each one a greater or smaller part of the position. For example, a specific position element might refer to a task the incumbent must perform, or a situation he must be concerned about, or something he *cannot* do, or an attitude he must maintain, or what the position might mean to his wife. A particular executive position will then display patterns or arrangements of its elements which distinguish it from other executive positions. We can then proceed to identify the basic dimensions underlying these patterns of job elements.

It is important to recognize that the identical position can look different to different persons who have varying associations with it. It may be seen by an incumbent's superior or by his subordinates to have different characteristics from those that he recognizes. Nevertheless, the terms in which positions in general are described do not seem to differ significantly with the identity of observers. Incumbents may disagree with their associates about exactly how a job measures up in this respect or that, but they can agree on the parts or dimensions that are important.

One of the things I am suggesting here, of course, is that we cannot understand a position simply by watching the man who holds it do things. The knowledge that he answered such and such a telephone call at 10:30, discussed such and such a project with Jones and Smith at 10:40, and so on through the day does not tell us nearly enough. There is more to a job than that. What we need to know are the *expectations* of the man and his superior concerning the position. In one way or another the executive is continually observing these expectations, and they have a profound influence both on his actions and on those of his associates. Here lies the source of many conflicts in executive work. And here is the reason why a manager does not have what might be called "one job" but a combination of jobs, with all that means for promotion, delegation of responsibility, rotation of assignments, and so forth.

These and other considerations have guided the extensive research undertaken by ETS to determine the basic dimensions of executive positions. The results, which I shall report presently, do not parallel conventional thinking in this area. Rather, they provide new and possibly more powerful ways of looking at the similarities and differences in executive work. The findings should have general validity in almost any industrial company, for they are relatively independent of the details of function, managerial level, and local situation; but they are likely to be of more limited use in governmental and other nonbusiness organizations.

Basic Dimensions

Ten dimensions of managerial work stand out in importance. These ten do not provide an exhaustive description of every executive job; in fact, they may leave parts of some positions

uncovered. But as the list of dimensions is extended beyond the ones I shall discuss, each additional dimension plays a smaller role and in fewer positions has a significant bearing.

When the study was begun, 93 executive positions were classified by level and by function. EXHIBIT I shows how many of the jobs thus classified measured relatively high on each dimension. This exhibit will be useful for reference as we describe the dimensions, comment on them, and, in a subsequent section, outline the methods used to develop the findings.

I shall discuss each dimension briefly, noting first the types of job element that are most pertinent and then giving a short list of titles that are likely to denote positions measuring high on the dimension (titles can be very misleading, as we shall see later):

A. Providing a staff service in nonoperational areas — This dimension of an executive position indicates that the incumbent renders various staff services to superiors. These services may be in the areas of personnel, law, administrative procedures, or special projects. The services consist of gathering information, interviewing, selecting employees, briefing superiors, checking statements, verifying facts, and making recommendations. Services are performed with the aid of a very small staff — possibly no more than one secretary — under the direct supervision of the executive. Incumbents of positions that measure high on this dimension tend not to be engaged in activities and/or to be concerned with the more directly operational areas of the business, such as production of physical products, inventories, budgets, and cost control.

The following titles appear likely to describe positions that measure high on this dimension:

1. Secretary
2. Engineer of Outside Plant
3. Assistant Treasurer
4. Assistant General Purchasing Agent
5. Director of Personnel Services
6. Division Employment Supervisor

Though these positions are at different levels of management, each involves providing staff service.

B. Supervision of work — This dimension indicates that the incumbent plans, organizes, and controls the work of others. His activities entail direct contact with workers and with machines. He is concerned with the efficient use of equipment, the motivation of subordinates, efficiency of operation, and the maintenance of a work force. The concerns covered by this dimension are restricted to getting work done efficiently. The incumbent is not concerned directly with market

trends, new business, sales objectives, forecasting, or improvements in products.

Positions with the following titles measure high on supervision of work:

1. Division Auditor of Receipts
2. Manager, Manufacturing Accounting Unit
3. Works Manager
4. Manager of Manufacturing
5. Section Supervisor
6. District Traffic Manager

Three of these six positions are at the beginning-management level (as classified at the outset of the study). The remaining three are at the middle-management level. Supervision of work usually does not appear as a characteristic of upper-management positions.

C. Internal business control — This dimension indicates that the manager's activities and concerns are in the areas of cost reduction, maintenance of proper inventories, preparation of budgets, justification of capital expenditures, determination of goals, definition of supervisory responsibilities, payment of salaries, and enforcement of regulations. This dimension is also indicative of the fact that the incumbent tends not to represent the company, meet the public, work with customers, or get involved in details. His position places emphasis on the technical and routine application of various types of business controls.

Positions with titles like the following measure high on this dimension:

1. Budget Administrator
2. Division Manager
3. Plant Manager
4. Operations Manager
5. General Sales Manager
6. Division Auditor of Receipts

Business control characterizes middle- and upper-level positions in sales or manufacturing and also may occur in certain positions in the area of accounting. Two of the six positions just listed were classified as upper management. Indeed, taking the upper-management positions we studied as a whole, EXHIBIT I shows that they scored higher on control than did positions at any other management level.

D. Technical aspects of products and markets — This dimension of an executive position has to do with activities and concerns in technical areas related to products, markets, and customers. The incumbent is concerned with the development of new business, activities of competitors, and changes in demand for products or services. He maintains contacts with customers; he consolidates and

EXHIBIT I. PROPORTION OF POSITIONS (AS ORIGINALLY CLASSIFIED BY LEVEL AND BY FUNCTION)
WHICH MEASURE RELATIVELY HIGH ON EACH OF THE TEN DIMENSIONS

FUNCTION	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Research & Development (11 positions)	.91	.54	.55	.91	.27	.82	.00	.54	.27	.18
Sales (24 positions)	.42	.16	.79	.62	.54	.29	.50	.21	.17	.21
General Administration (22 positions)	.68	.54	.67	.55	.18	.49	.36	.27	.27	.32
Manufacturing (26 positions)	.43	.54	.81	.31	.39	.46	.42	.62	.27	.39
Industrial Relations (10 positions)	1.00	.70	.00	.30	.70	.70	.20	.80	.60	.50

analyzes data; he generally assists salesmen with important accounts. He tends not to be concerned with personnel problems or industrial relations. He has less than the usual restrictions on personal behavior.

This dimension characterizes the following positions to a greater extent than other positions:

1. Agency and Construction Department Manager
2. Apparatus Department Sales Manager
3. Division Director of Research
4. Vice President, Sales
5. Engineering Section Manager
6. Division Sales Manager

Positions that measure high on this dimension tend to carry titles indicative of high-level selling, product engineering, or both.

E. Human, community, and social affairs —

This dimension is indicative of a requirement to be effective in working with others. The incumbent is concerned with the goodwill of the company in the community, maintaining the respect of important persons, speaking before the public, and "sizing up" people. He is involved in nominating key personnel for promotion, appraising performance, and selecting managers. His job requires that he participate in community affairs, belong to clubs, and be active in civic organizations. His activities tend to keep him from many economic matters related to the business.

The following titles are often attached to positions that measure high on this dimension:

1. District Manager
2. Agency and Construction Department Manager
3. General Manager, Retail Division
4. Regional Manager
5. Division Employment Supervisor
6. Plant Manager

F. Long-range planning — This dimension refers to systematic long-range thinking and planning. The concerns of the incumbent are broad and are oriented toward the future of the company. These concerns extend to industrial relations, development of management, long-range objectives of the organization, solvency of the company, pilot projects, the business activities that the company should engage in, existing or proposed legislation that might affect the company, and the evaluation of new ideas. The incumbent tends not to get involved in routines or details and tends to be free from direct concern with activities of subordinates.

Long-range planning is a distinct part of the following positions:

1. Chief, Process and Development Division
2. Unit Manager, Tabulation and Production Control
3. Assistant Vice President, Engineering
4. Manager, Retail Sales Staff
5. Section Supervisor, Research Division
6. Chief, Process Engineering Division

Three of these six positions are classified as research and development positions; the rest represent sales, manufacturing, and general administration. Upper-level positions as a group score higher on this dimension than lower-level jobs.

G. Exercise of broad power and authority —

This dimension indicates that the executive exercises broad power and has final authority in a number of areas. He visits the major units of the company each year, makes recommendations on very important matters, keeps informed about the company's performance, makes use of staff people, and interprets policy. He is concerned with the relationship with unions, capital expenditures, and the long-range solvency of the company. He has unusual freedom of personal action and his position carries very high status.

Positions that measure high on this dimension have titles like the following:

1. Division Manager
2. Assistant Vice President, Personnel
3. Vice President for Manufacturing
4. General Sales Manager
5. General Manager of a Division
6. General Manager, Division Sales

Four of these six positions are classified in the upper-management category. (The remaining two would also have been rated as "top management" in most companies, but in the firms where they existed there were many other positions with even more power, so that relatively speaking they were not upper-management jobs.)

H. Business reputation — This dimension indicates a general responsibility for the reputation of the company's products or services. The manager's concerns extend broadly in either or both of two major directions — product quality and/or public relations. He deals with product design, quality, product improvement, complaints concerning products or services, delivery schedules, and the general goodwill of the company. The position makes stringent demands on his personal behavior, since deviations might reflect on the company's reputation. The position carries high status and the incumbent tends not to get involved in the details of making reports, consulting, or data analysis.

The following titles may denote positions measuring high on this dimension:

1. Employment Manager
2. Vice President, Manufacturing
3. Vice President, Purchases & Traffic
4. District Traffic Manager
5. Chief, Process Engineering Division
6. Plant Manager

The dual nature of this dimension is reflected in the fact that, as EXHIBIT I indicates, incumbents in positions in the areas of industrial relations, manufacturing, and research and development most often emphasize the importance of business reputation questions in their work. One might also expect sales executives to include such concerns as a part of their job, but this does not appear to be the case. No sales executive in the study offered evidence that could be used to rate his position high on this dimension, and three of the five who saw their position as involving a medium amount of concern with business reputation were at the beginning-management level. These observations suggest the need for further study of sales positions with respect to their relationships to the control of product quality and public relations.

I. Personal demands — This dimension of an executive position indicates stringent demands on the personal behavior of the incumbent. The incumbent shows an unusually high concern with the propriety of his behavior, especially in his interactions with superiors. He shows less concern with maintaining the general goodwill or reputation of his company in the community. He senses obligations to conduct himself according to the stereotype of the conservative businessman. His activities are most likely to be at the highest staff levels and to involve analysis of operations, setting objectives, and participating in decisions that are made at high levels.

The following are titles of positions that are high on this dimension:

1. Vice President, Manufacturing
2. Director of Purchases
3. Budget Administrator
4. Manager of Accounting
5. Division Works Manager
6. Controller

J. Preservation of assets — This dimension indicates activities and concerns directly associated with the preservation of the physical assets of the company. The incumbent's concerns include capital expenditures, expenditures of large sums in routine operations, taxes, preservation of assets, and the loss of company money. He has the au-

thority to sign documents that obligate the company. He tends not to be concerned with industrial relations or technical operations.

The following positions are the six among the 93 we studied that measure highest on this dimension:

1. Manager, "-----" Timber Unit
2. Vice President, Manufacturing
3. Advertising and Sales Promotion Manager
4. Assistant Treasurer
5. Timberland Manager
6. Vice President, Purchase & Traffic

The positions that measure high on this dimension are generally found at the higher levels of management or in special areas (for example, resource management) of particular importance to the corporation.

Research Procedure

The methods used in this study are not "secret," and the ten dimensions decided on are not "final." As a matter of fact, it is my hope that future studies can be undertaken which will build on and refine the one reported in this article. I should like to turn now, therefore, to the general methods used by Educational Testing Service in developing its conclusions.

Executive Questionnaire

Each of the 93 executives in the five companies earlier mentioned was given a questionnaire listing 575 possible job "elements." He was asked to report to what extent each element was a part of his job. The job elements given him were the end result of a search of the literature pertaining to executive work, distillation of the contents of position description forms in current use, and interviews with executives. These 575 elements were selected from a larger number that were tried out in preliminary forms of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was organized into four parts — (1) position activities, 239 elements; (2) position responsibilities, 189 elements; (3) position demands and restrictions, 84 elements; and (4) position characteristics, miscellaneous, 63 elements. The following is a short sample of the elements included in the questionnaire:

- Instruct employees in proper procedures.
- Review plans with outside agencies.
- Estimate the life of new construction.
- Personally do routine work.
- Adjust customer complaints.

Be concerned with local political developments.
 Be concerned with the design and construction of new building.
 Be concerned with tightly planned schedules.
 Be active in community affairs.
 Refrain from being even a few minutes late.
 Be away from home at least 60 days per year.
 The position gives me a voice in company policy.
 The position involves duties that are in a constant state of flux.

Before the questionnaire was given, the job elements were reviewed with a number of experienced executives in several different companies. The men were invited to suggest new elements that were not covered. The fact that no new elements were suggested confirmed the view that the list was comprehensive.

In responding to the questionnaire, an executive placed a number from 0 to 7 in a blank in the margin before each element, according to the following range:

0. Definitely not part of the position, does not apply, or is not true.
1. Under unusual circumstances may be a minor part of the position.
2.
3.
4. A substantial part of the position.
5.
6.
7. A most significant part of the position.

Thus the description that the executive provided of his job consisted of his judgments regarding what part of his job each of the 575 elements represented. To help readers visualize the form in which answers were received, I have reproduced in EXHIBIT II a few illustrative sections from one completed questionnaire selected at random from our files.

Characteristics of Positions

Each of the five companies provided between 17 and 20 positions to make up the 93. These positions were drawn from various branches, plants, or offices of the companies located throughout the United States. They were classified according to organization level and general business function as follows:

POSITION LEVELS

Upper Management — Consists of executive positions with the following titles: Vice President; Assistant Vice President; Division Manager; General Manager; Area Manager; Comptroller; Treasurer. These are positions within the upper three

echelons of management and with a basic salary range above \$15,000. (24 positions)

Middle Management — Consists of executives with the following titles: Plant Manager; Plant Superintendent; Operations Manager; Director, Labor Relations; Research Manager; Director, Quality Control; etc. These are positions at or above the third level of supervision but not "top management." The basic salary range is from \$10,000 to \$15,000. (48 positions)

Beginning Management — Consists of executives with the following titles: General Supervisor; Head Supervisor; Purchasing Agent; General Foreman; etc. These positions are at the "second" level of supervision. To qualify, the incumbent must exercise supervision over the activities of at least one subordinate supervisor. This basic salary range is from \$6,000 to \$10,000. (21 positions)

FUNCTIONAL AREAS

Research and Development — Research, product development, consultant engineering, product planning, customer research. (11 positions)

Sales — Sales, advertising, distribution, promotion, market planning, sales engineering, merchandising, packaging. (24 positions)

Manufacturing — Production, purchasing, plant operations, works engineering, quality control, traffic, transportation, warehousing. (22 positions)

General Administration — Accounting, insurance, data processing, legal information services, treasury, payroll, taxes, auditor, finance, banking, publicity, budgets, patents, operations analysis, office procedures. (26 positions)

Industrial Relations — Labor relations, wage and salary administration, employee benefits, training, personnel services, management development, recreation, college recruitment, employment, union negotiations, grievances. (10 positions)

First-line supervisory positions were excluded from the study. As a practical means of distinguishing an executive from a supervisor we considered an executive to be a man who supervises the work of someone who also supervises others (or, in the case of staff executives, individuals having equivalent status in the organization).

Analysis of Data

The descriptions of positions provided by the 93 executives were systematically interrelated and compared to reveal similarities and differences. In general, the analysis involved correlating each position description with each of the remaining 92 descriptions and then apply-

EXHIBIT II. ILLUSTRATIVE SECTIONS FROM A COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE

AN INDIVIDUAL IN MY POSITION WOULD:

- 3 1. Plan the analysis of quantitative data.
- 0 2. Negotiate bank loans for the company.
- 2 3. See people who solicit contributions to charities from the company.
- 3 4. Counsel subordinates on the selection of employees.
- 1 5. Forecast the volume of work to be done in the near future.
- 0 6. Settle claims against the company.
- 7 7. Maintain office equipment.
- 2 8. Counsel subordinates about their professional development.
- 0 9. Maintain personal contact with heads of union groups.
- 3 10. Formulate maintenance programs.
- 4 11. Examine preliminary building plans.
- 4 12. Prepare progress reports on special projects.

MY POSITION REQUIRES THAT I:

- 5 429. Refrain from activities that might imply sympathy for unions.
- 0 430. Be active in community affairs.
- 0 431. Refrain from comment critical of the operations of some other unit of the company.
- 3 432. Be well acquainted with the personal problems of my subordinates.
- 7 433. Observe company rules and regulations without exceptions.
- 2 434. Issue instructions that may be unpopular with subordinates.
- 1 435. Report infractions of regulations on the part of subordinates.
- 2 436. Avoid personal publicity.
- 2 437. Avoid identification with political elements that others consider radical.
- 0 438. Even during most relaxed social occasions avoid deviations from accepted behavior.
- 0 439. Live in an area recognized for the substantial quality of the neighborhood.

ing a special method of factor analysis developed by Ledyard Tucker.¹ This approach led to the discovery of basic types of similarities and differences among management positions, as well as to the development of the ten dimensions I have described. The technical details of the analysis need not concern us here; the important thing is that the procedure ensured the discovery of position dimensions general enough to cut across different business functions — dimensions that would not be limited in usefulness to specific jobs or types of jobs.

Simplified Form

The 575-item questionnaire used in the first study is entirely too long to be of practical use by executives. Fortunately, it is also longer than is necessary to obtain satisfactory measurements for each of the ten dimensions of a job. Unless

management wants to examine a larger number of dimensions, it can use a considerably shorter questionnaire. A new form now available from ETS, by arrangement, contains 191 position elements — enough to measure positions on all ten yardsticks — and can be completed by an executive in about one hour.

Getting useful data about a job depends only partly on asking the right questions. It also depends on how the answers are interpreted. For example, if an executive puts a number “3” opposite question 50, he is providing information not for just one dimension of his job but for several. Moreover, for purposes of measuring his job on one yardstick, the “3” may be a plus, while for another yardstick it may be a

¹ Ledyard R. Tucker, “An Inter-Battery Method of Factor Analysis,” *Psychometrika*, Volume 23 (1958), pp. 111-136.

minus. This and other considerations must be kept in mind when the "raw" responses are examined. It is the *scoring* that gives management a picture of what a job contains, not the individual questions and answers themselves. Accordingly, questionnaire data need to be analyzed by trained specialists, and so far the arrangements have been for ETS to do it.

Meaning of Title

How much does a title tell us about the characteristics of a managerial position? The answer is, not very much — at least, not if our ten yardsticks are used to judge. This can be seen from an examination of the similarities and differences between positions having about the same titles. Any one dimension may be characterized by certain kinds of titles (as we saw in a preceding section), but no one job as measured on *all ten* dimensions can be counted on to have this title or that.

For evidence on this point, let us go back to the 93 positions in five companies supplying data for the study. These positions included 5 with titles like "Division Manager," 3 with titles like "Plant Manager," 3 with titles like "Vice President, Manufacturing," 2 with titles like "General Sales Manager," 2 with titles like "District Sales Manager," 2 with titles like "Production Manager," and 2 with titles like "Section Supervisor, Research." EXHIBIT III shows how these positions measure up on the ten dimensions. The data were obtained by scoring the incumbents' descriptions of their jobs and then classifying the scores as high, medium, or low on each dimension.

Plant & Division Managers

Let us begin with the data on division managers. All five men have line positions in which control of business operations is of prime importance, and not surprisingly there are similarities — for example, all the jobs are rated low on providing a staff service (Dimension A). But look at the differences:

- As EXHIBIT III shows, three of the five division managers describe their positions as high on business control (Dimension C), but the remaining two describe theirs as medium.

- Human, community, and social affairs (Dimension E) is high only for the fifth position.

- Both the first and second division manager positions are in the same company. Yet on exer-

cise of broad powers (Dimension G) one is low and the other high.

Now let us go on to another group. Each of the three plant manager positions is from a different company. These positions are like the division managers insofar as they tend to have high or medium business control (Dimension C). They also tend to be low on providing a staff service (Dimension A), technical products and markets (Dimension D), personal demands (Dimension I) and preservation of assets (Dimension J). They are *not* like some of the division manager positions in their low emphasis on long-range planning (Dimension F) and on exercise of broad powers (Dimension G). But somewhere around this point any strong comparisons end between this group and others or between members of this group. Thus:

- One plant manager is low on human affairs, one medium, and one high.

- Two plant managers are medium on the business reputation dimension, as are two division managers; but the remaining plant manager ranks high whereas the remaining division managers rank low.

Other Positions

In terms of the usual hierarchy of business positions, division managers are placed above plant managers, and manufacturing vice presidents are put still higher. At this higher level we observe a marked shift in the dimension scores. No longer do we find business control (Dimension C) receiving generally high emphasis; one position is low. Emphasis is shifted instead to business reputation (Dimension H), personal demands (Dimension I), and preservation of assets (Dimension J), which now appear in all three vice-president positions as either high or medium. As we move up the position hierarchy from plant manager to vice president (manufacturing), we also note a progressive shifting of emphasis from the direct supervision and control of operations through planning and through the exercise of broad powers to concerns with reputation of the company, demands on personal behavior, and preservation of the organization as a going concern.

Similar shifts can be observed elsewhere in EXHIBIT III — the tendency of district sales managers to serve more in a staff capacity than do general sales managers, for instance, or the tendency for production managers to have less

EXHIBIT III. HOW CERTAIN EXECUTIVE POSITIONS WITH SIMILAR TITLES MEASURE ON TEN DIMENSIONS

Position Title	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
	Staff service	Supervision of work	Business control	Technical products & markets	Human affairs	Planning	Broad power	Business reputation	Personal demands	Preservation of assets
Vice President, Manufacturing	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium
Vice President, Manufacturing	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	High	High	High
Vice President, Manufacturing	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium	Medium
Division Manager	Low	Low	High	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low
Division Manager	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Low	High	Low	Low	Low
Division Manager	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
Division Manager	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low
Division Manager	Low	Medium	High	Low	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Medium
Plant Manager	Low	Low	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Low
Plant Manager	Low	Medium	High	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Low
Plant Manager	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	High	Low	Low	High	Medium	Low
General Sales Manager	Low	Low	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	Low
General Sales Manager	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	High	Low	Low	Low
District Sales Manager	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
District Sales Manager	High	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Low
Production Manager	Low	Low	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	High	Low	Low
Production Manager	Medium	Low	High	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low
Section Supervisor, Research	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	High	Low	Low	Low	Low
Section Supervisor, Research	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low

concern about personal demands or preservation of assets than do manufacturing vice presidents. But in numerous cases jobs with the same title continue to differ on this dimension or that, so much so that as often as not it is impossible to say that they are either like each other or unlike other positions.

Applications

The ten-dimensions approach has important applications to the problems of top management, but its limitations should always be kept well in mind.

Of special importance is the fact that the dimensions do not completely cover any position. There will remain parts of the job that are outside the range of the dimensions and that may be relatively unique to the company or the business situation at a given point in time. Certainly, too, positions will change their characteristics from time to time both within and without the framework provided by the ten dimensions. These considerations do not, of course, take anything away from the importance of having available suitable bench marks to facilitate observation, comparison, and analysis. If anything, they *add* to the value of such guides.

The general value of the approach I have outlined does not need to be belabored. It is clear that potential management ability cannot readily be identified without knowledge of the common denominators of executive work. If, for example, certain executive positions emphasize performance in one area or along one dimension and other positions do not require such performance, we need to know this. It is entirely conceivable that the lack of a personal quality that would lead to the prediction of a failure in an executive position placing high demands on that quality would not disqualify the individual for other executive positions. To illustrate:

An executive being considered for promotion might not be the right man at all for a job opening where Dimension F is important. He might not have any of the imagination needed for long-range planning, or any of the tolerance for uncertain future situations that is required, and he might have a tendency to want to evaluate situations sharply which would cause him many frustrations. But this same man could be very well qualified indeed for a job scoring high on Dimension C (control), where the company's need is for a person who is quick to judge and who is hard-

headed, practical, and relatively intolerant of ambiguous situations.

Organizational Analysis

Beyond such advantages as this, the concept of the ten dimensions can be of considerable use, I believe, in analyzing the general management structure of a company. What we want to keep in mind is that a top-executive job is not necessarily created by a man's doing top-executive work. The man who is doing the top-executive work may be doing it at the expense of his subordinates or his other duties — making things harder for a lower man, robbing that man of responsibility, or overloading himself. The situation that he has been assigned to handle may not, in other words, be the one — or the only one — that he is actually handling.

This is not necessarily a bad thing. The question is whether top management *knows* about it and *approves*. Perhaps the company is getting a bargain — paying a man a beginning-management salary to exercise broad power, control, and other prerogatives that normally go with top-level jobs. (The man's boss who would ordinarily be doing these jobs might be incompetent or sick.) Then, again, perhaps the company is letting itself in for a good deal of trouble.

What I am saying is that the 14% of beginning-management executives in EXHIBIT 1 who were exercising (or thought they were exercising) broad power and authority may or may not be setting a precedent that their companies want followed or that other companies ought to follow. And the same could be said about the 45% of top executives who were *not* exercising broad power — and, for that matter, about all other figures in the exhibit.

The fact that only 42% of the men in top-level positions think the preservation of assets is an important part of their job, and that only 32% of the men in general administrative positions do, might or might not make the presidents of the companies happy. Perhaps the chief executives do not *want* more than a handful of managers worrying about this question. But they should know about the fact because it has an important bearing on their organizations. A management group with many men concerned about, say, the preservation of assets will not operate the same as a group with only a few men so concerned.

Now let us proceed to the areas in which an "executive position description" questionnaire like ETS's can be applied. Besides being the key to knowledge about the dimensions, it has a variety of other uses.

Reduction of Misunderstanding

Not infrequently an executive finds that he and his superior have not been completely clear between themselves about some part of the executive's position. The two may have had many conversations about their respective duties and responsibilities but still have not covered significant parts of the position. Even if there is an official description for the position, there may remain many areas for possible misunderstanding.

Because of its systematic coverage of positions, the questionnaire offers a means of reducing misunderstanding. One suggested way of employing the questionnaire for this purpose is for both the executive and his superior to complete the questionnaire independently, each describing the executive's position. Subsequent comparison of the two descriptions will reveal any significant discrepancies. Discussion of the areas where discrepancies occur can lead to more definite understandings. It seems axiomatic that greater understanding on the part of both the executive and his superior will result in a more effective working relationship.

Job Rotation

An executive's experience can be enlarged by assigning him to a variety of different positions in his company. This method is frequently employed in executive development. However, job rotations may be expensive and inconvenient. It is important, therefore, that such rotations be made with care and consideration. The contemplated rotation can be regarded as an opportunity for executive development only if it actually offers new experiences. At the same time, it must not place the executive in a situation which is beyond his present ability to meet successfully. Failure would be costly, both in terms of his loss of self-confidence and in terms of direct losses to the company due to ineffective performance.

Use of job rotation in executive development demands a comprehensive knowledge both of the positions the executive has occupied in the past and of the positions to which he might be assigned to further his development. The questionnaire can provide this information. When-

ever an executive is identified as ready for a change in position assignment, I suggest that he be requested to complete the questionnaire describing his present position. He would also complete a questionnaire for each major executive position he has occupied in the past. This would bring his experience file up to date.

From the descriptions of his present and previous positions the dimensions of his past experience are made evident. Areas of inexperience are revealed. These areas indicate weaknesses in the executive's development and are the key to his next assignment.

The next step in effecting a desirable rotation for the executive is to secure descriptions of the positions available to him with rotation. The incumbents of the available positions can provide these descriptions by completing the questionnaire. A match can then be made between the executive areas of experience and inexperience and the opportunities available for their development in the available positions. A balance can be maintained between challenging new experiences and the executive's present ability to perform satisfactorily in the new position. To illustrate:

Suppose a manager has had no experience in jobs with opportunities to develop skill in handling community and social affairs (Dimension E). All of his experience has been in engineering and technical staff work. But his superior thinks he has aptitudes for handling community affairs and so wants to steer him in that direction.

Two job openings appear — one a public relations job, the other position in a small manufacturing plant located in a nearby community. The first job would give a very heavy exposure to the new type of responsibility; the second job would offer a partial exposure to it. The senior executive decides to put his man in the second job, giving him a small dose of experience in the Dimension E line instead of a "baptism by fire." *Later on* the public relations job might be considered as more suitable.

Appraisal of Performance

An executive's performance can only be appraised in those areas in which he has an opportunity to work. This fact seems obvious; yet the majority of performance appraisal methods make little or no provision for the wide range of difference in the work of different executives. The same performance rating form or procedures apply to all men. This can lead to frustration on the part of the conscientious rater and

to an over-all decrease in the effectiveness of an appraisal program. At best, many of the ratings that are made are simply meaningless because the position of the executive does not call for the performance that is to be rated.

The executive position description questionnaire can point to the significant parts of each executive position, and the appraisal can then be limited to these parts. Thus, if in his work he has little or no opportunity to do "long-range planning," the manager cannot and should not be appraised on how effective he is at "long-range planning." Appraisal procedures can be tailored to the significant areas of each position, thus producing more meaningful results.

Salary Administration

The questionnaire furnishes a needed tool for executive salary administration. The value of a formal plan for executive salary administration rests on its providing an objective basis rather than a subjective one for differences in executive compensation. The common shortcoming in most current plans is an inadequate means of objectively determining and specifying the relevant differences among positions. Job "factors" such as the "amount of responsibility" or "technical know-how" are frequently used to give a salary plan an air of objectivity. However, the methods by which one job is determined to involve more responsibility than a second remain in the realm of subjective opinion.

The questionnaire can be used to provide an objective base for salary administration plans. First, it can be completed by the incumbent and his superior to cover the position under consideration. These two should then compare their descriptions, job element by job element, and reach an agreement about what part of the position is represented by each of the elements. The position description that results from their agreement about its elements will yield a set of scores, one for each of the ten dimensions of executive work. These scores are objective in the sense that both the incumbent and his supe-

rior have agreed about what specific elements make up the position.

It is my experience that there is usually agreement between two executives on the broad, general outlines of a job, but that they are likely to disagree more often than they might expect on the specific elements pointed up in the questionnaire. I know of one case, for instance, where an executive of an appliance firm denied that his job had anything to do with the organization's business reputation and maintained that he did not and should not be concerned with this subject. His bosses were disturbed, however. They felt that he *should* be doing more about the company's standing. It is good to have such misunderstandings brought to the surface in discussing the questionnaire answers, rather than transferred to the salary program and left to upset feelings there.

The dimension scores can serve as the objective base from which a compensation rate for a position is calculated. Such a calculation necessitates an over-all or company-wide evaluation of the worth of the different dimensions of executive work. For example, a decision may have to be made as to the relative worth of supervision of work (Dimension B) as compared with long-range planning (Dimension F). Such a decision is not easy to make; but, once arrived at, it can be applied to all executive positions in the organization with impartiality.

Conclusion

In general, the "executive position description" questionnaire provides a needed tool for those persons who are charged with responsibility for managing and developing the company's managerial talent. The tool is not limited in its use to any one general philosophy about business organization or management development but is adaptable to a variety of purposes and programs. Its usefulness is in its power to replace guesswork with dependable information on the general characteristics of executive work.

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