

FACTS

by H. S. Geneen

Many of the reports which are being prepared in the Company in answer to policy questions or to decide action steps are inadequately put together for the purpose of DECISION and for UNDERSTANDING of how the RECOMMENDATION was arrived at and WHO is RESPONSIBLE for the recommendation.

In short, a professional report must start with a brief summary that gives in CLEAR factual language (1) the action recommended; (2) the problems; (3) the reasoning behind the recommendation in terms of its relation to the problem; and (4) the position taken by the writer of the report or memorandum. Evasive language at this point is a sign of poor preparation or poor sense of responsibility. Effective immediately I want every report specifically, directly and bluntly to state at the beginning a summary containing the following facts in this order.

1. A clear short statement of the action recommended.
2. A brief summary of what the problem really is.
3. The reasoning and the figures where necessary for clarity and perspective, to understand the basis of the reasoning and judgment areas leading to this recommendation.
4. A brief personal statement by the writer expressing any further personal opinion, his degree of confidence and any other questions that he has in this respect.

Obviously, to make this kind of direct, clear-judgment statement, one must first do hard "crisp" thinking and adequate homework. Otherwise, we will get a continuation of vague general statements and reports which indicate no clear position, or basis for any, taken by the writer. In the future this kind of "indefinite" statement and report will be subject to review with the author, and action will be taken on this point alone.

It is understood that there may well be behind these statements additional data, material, graphs, etc., showing in more detail the basis of the statements made in 1 through 4 above.

This whole approach follows normal professional report writing and it is to be adopted immediately throughout the Company as it is necessary to and fits in with our whole method of lucid, direct, open discussion and assigned responsibility. Let me add that there is nothing serious about an occasional wrong conclusion. We should be trained as a group to detect and refute most of these. However, there is a lot of wasted time involved in vague reports which reflect lack of judgment or homework, and in this direction lies perpetual mediocrity. Let's have none of this.

Yesterday we put in a long, hard, driving meeting, mostly seeking the "facts" on which easy management decisions could then be made. I think the important conclusion to be drawn is simple.

There is no word in the English language that more strongly conveys the intent of incontrovertibility, i.e., "final and reliable reality," than the word "fact." However, no word is more honored by its

breach in actual usage. For example, there are and we saw yesterday:

"Apparent facts"

"Assumed facts"

"Reported facts"

"Hoped for facts"

"Facts" so labeled and accepted as facts—i.e., "accepted facts"—and many others of similar derivation!

In most cases these were not the "facts" at all.

In many cases of daily life this point may not be too important. But in the areas of management momentum and decisions, it is all important! whole trains of events and decisions for an entire management can be put in motion in the wrong direction—with inevitable loss of money, time, and morale — by one "unfactual fact," "accepted by" or "submitted by"—YOU—however unintentional.

The highest art of professional management requires the literal ability to "smell" a "real fact" from all others—and moreover to have the temerity, intellectual curiosity, guts and/or plain impoliteness, if necessary, to be sure that what you do have is indeed what we will call an "unshakable fact."

That is the kind of "fact material" we have to deal in. And, as a member of the team, it is the only kind you can accept or submit — as our management team has to rely on each member exercising the greatest care in this respect as to the material he submits for the team's common use.

So let me invite you and at the same time insist that you now become a "connoisseur of all these kinds of facts" — so that you can then tell a "genuine snapping turtle" from the others — and so that you can learn to force to the surface and deal only with "unshakable facts" in the future.

You will hear a lot more of this term "unshakable facts" as we go forward; it is a never ending discipline and one that we need.

So, good luck with them — and start now — IS IT A FACT? but more important, IS IT AN "UNSHAKABLE FACT"?

H. S. Geneen

P.S. No matter what you think, try "shaking it" —to be sure!

P.P.S. Send this message down the line.

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