

## *Serving as Chairman of the County Staff*

Coordination of the county staff is essential to an aggressive and effective Extension program

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DAYS are not long enough to get everything done. Work in the office is piling up. Letters need answering; reports must be completed; staff members are vying for secretarial time; field work needs more attention; and you feel the situation will get worse before it gets better. Even so, you have been told that being in charge of a county staff is easy and that it will solve the problems of the staff. The need for effective staff administration may be evident, but are you qualified for the responsibility?

What is county staff administration, office management, staff coordination, or whatever you choose to call it? These terms may be defined in many ways but the objective is the important concern—it is to secure maximum effectiveness of the county staff by using all available resources. To do so requires training, work, and understanding. Answers are needed for such questions as: Where do I start? What is involved? How do I get this worked out? And, do I know what I am trying to do?

### *It Begins With You*

Effective county staff administration begins with you. Two groups of Extension agents are now seeking to improve themselves. One group, a majority, wants an easy answer. They want ready-made solutions to involved administrative problems but are not willing to take time to study and think. Answers with a minimum of effort, not solutions with understanding, is the goal.

A small group—and it is from this group that educational leaders develop—is searching for clues and principles rather than answers.

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They want clues and principles which can be combined with their own experiences to solve problems effectively. It has been said this smaller group now includes about five per cent of the top leadership.

Through training it is possible to move from the larger, less effective group to a place of prominence. This role or position must be earned by acquiring an understanding of principles of administration and how to apply them. You might find yourself placed in the role of coordinator of a county staff by an administrative director, but this within itself does not mean that you will be effective. Success or failure rests with you.

### *Prepare Yourself*

An important step to preparing yourself for the key position on a county staff is developing a philosophy and understanding of the principles and skills in administration. Experience in administration cannot be purchased or borrowed but adjustments and changes in thinking and performance in relationship to your own training and experiences can be made. In our daily rush it is easy to pass by warehouses of useful recorded experiences—experiences based upon factors proved to be scientifically sound through practical application. Individual effort is the only key which will unlock this vast store of knowledge.

After receiving training in administration, formal or self-study, it is essential to take time to think. Briefly defined, thinking is the arranging of experiences into patterns which can be used in specific situations. If experience is then studied in its proper setting, it can provide many useful clues to making work effective in administration, teaching, research, job analysis and performance, and professional training. It will also provide vision which can be identified and applied to the responsibility for county staff administration.

### *Experience of Others*

If each person had to discover the basic principles and laws given us by people such as Edison, Newton, and Pasteur, he would not go very far. It is just as important to accept what is known of administration for use in the Extension Service as it is for other professional groups to accept and use previously acquired knowledge in their fields. Experiences of others in administration make it unnecessary for us to follow a process of trial and error in our efforts to be effective. Understanding and applying principles of administration can greatly increase the potential of a county staff.

### *Self-Analysis and Training*

Self-analysis and training in administration on a continuing basis can prepare you for responsibilities by adding to your skill and knowledge. This should include study in administrative theory, principles, decision making, supervision, and human relations. An analysis of how you get along with people reflects your philosophy toward staff administration. In turn, it predicts your chances of success or failure.

Determine ways in which the human climate in which the staff works can be improved because every individual can make your job easier or more difficult. Work habits can be developed which will secure cooperation—the result will be an improvement in county staff administration because staff members will evaluate your work and your working relationships.

### *Personal Guides*

Establish personal guides and practice them. Staff members will not follow an administrator who gets continuously in tight spots by poor performance while they work hard on their own responsibilities. Also, being accessible to your staff helps assure cooperation and coordination. Definite times for staff conferences provide the means to secure ideas and suggestions. Show staff members you value their abilities. Make it easy for others to help with difficult tasks you are supposed to do yourself. When you see others overburdened, be quick to take action.

Care should be used not to abuse generosity. Distinguish between an offer to help for the purpose of making an impression and one made in a spirit of cooperation. Boost your staff by giving credit to those who earn it. Study your own attitudes toward deadlines, toward your problems, and toward your own maturity in accepting problems as being a part of your job. Such guides will go a long way in establishing your philosophy of county staff administration.

### SUMMARY

It is recognized that coordination of the county staff is essential to an aggressive and effective Extension program. Opportunities are available to each county Extension staff member to demonstrate ability as a staff coordinator. State administrators recognize the need for good administration at the county level but county personnel must be prepared in order to benefit from and to function effectively in this role.