

"In the US, more and more firms are starting off their graduate intake as foremen, says #

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From foreman to company chief

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DR. EILERS, the new Chairman of Kodak, took three degrees including a Doctorate, and then worked as a foreman making acetate. This foreman episode may seem surprising, for in Britain, almost by definition, foremen are promoted workers, and do not have Doctorates. Nor do they become company chairmen.

In America things are different, and Doctorate holders, M.B.A.s, M.S.s, B.A.s, and other graduates do work as foremen. Dr. Eilers is in good company. J. K. Jamieson, President of the second largest company in the world, Standard Oil (N.J.), rose from being a graduate foreman in the Moose Jaw refinery, Saskatchewan. Harry Warner, President of Goodrich, was a shift foreman in a vinyl plant. Many top Presidents have shared the foremanship experience.

conductor, General Electric, Westinghouse and major chemical and steel concerns. As a result it is quite common to find 23-year-old graduates working with subordinates well over twice their age. One company refers to its newly introduced graduate foremen, behind their backs, as its "diaper brigade," but is very pleased indeed with their innovative push.

The practice in many companies is to have a "mixed foreman force" of graduate, technician and traditional foremen. These foremen are moved according to the kinds of problems the company experiences. The resultant behaviour of the foremen is quite different from that in a traditional foreman organisation. For one thing there is much more communication between all foremen and the technical specialists. Also

SOME INDUSTRIES USING GRADUATE FOREMEN IN THE U.S.

Industry	COMMENT— % of graduates among foremen
Chemicals and Oils	Widespread use—up to 50% common
Electronics	Widespread use—up to 50% common
Engineering	Practice varies widely—sometimes 30% but usually lower
Motors	Averages about 8-10% but varies from 0% to 30% plus technician type foremen
Textiles	Unheard of in New England, but common in the new Southern plants
Steel	10% + is common. Companies are keen but find it hard to attract grads. to this work
Telephone system	Keen users
Food, computers, rubber, etc.	Also use in varying proportions

This is one of the radical differences between American and British management sociology. Americans do not like stratification in a business: they want men rising from all parts into top management. The use of university and college graduates as foremen in the U.S. does not arise from a surplus of graduates. Leading companies have employed such men since the early years of this century. Companies find it valuable to have a proportion of supervisors whose knowledge is different from those they manage, particularly for the departments that have technical problems. And they believe foremanship is excellent experience, not only for the man who wants to make manufacturing his career, but also for specialists.

Some companies have had 50 per cent. graduates among their foremen for 20-30 years. Many move into industrial engineering, computer work, cost control, design, etc. One large electronics company on the West Coast is currently putting one-third of its graduate intake through the foreman slot.

The use is increasing, and companies of all sizes now have them. One textile company employing about 800 has 70 per cent. graduates among its foremen. Leaders in almost every industry use them, including General Motors, I.B.M., Xerox, A.T. & T., Texas Instruments, Fairchild Semi-

the group is much more independent. Promotable men among them try to show they are potential Works Managers, and that influences their colleagues.

Glenn Varney, a Director of the Center for Professional Development at Case Western Reserve University comments on one graduate foreman introduction: "After only a few appointments had been made, the behaviour of the entire foreman group changed. It was like putting a dash of colour in a pot of white paint. The whole can changed its shade." In effect management is demonstrating that a new kind of behaviour is appropriate for foremen, and many traditional foremen have the ability to respond.

American industry is much more pragmatic than generally believed. Companies are keen that most factory operational problems should be solved low in line management. To strengthen its lower line management, Kimberley Clark decided to introduce graduate first level supervision in one of its plants. They subsequently reported in a detailed National Industrial Conference Board study, "Managing at the Foreman Level," that the change allowed them to reduce the total number of graduates required in the plant by 50 per cent. as well as improving quality and reducing costs.