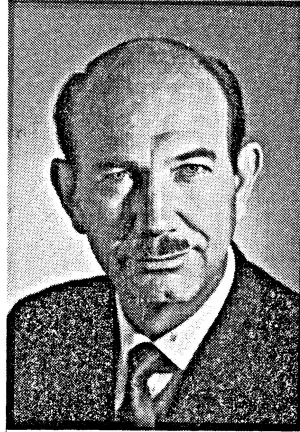


FROM THE EDITOR



MANAGEMENT INTERNSHIPS FOR WOMEN

The year 1975 has internationally been proclaimed as a Women's Year. A general assessment of the role and contribution of women to the society takes place at present. What contribution can women make to management practice in the future?

Let it be said that far too many well-educated, competent women, the most recently discovered "minority" group, are still forced to earn their living at a typewriter. Many of them have demonstrated academic ability and serious interest in a business career, but they lack the work experience necessary for effective participation in a post-graduate management training programme.

It is recognised that the few women who do enroll as students in management are younger than most of their male counterparts. It is not very easy for a woman of any age to establish credibility in classroom discussions. When she is amongst the youngest and least mature members of the class, it is even more difficult.

Prior exposure to the realities of business life is obviously needed; obtaining such background, however, presents a stumbling block for women university graduates. Jobs are reasonably plentiful, but mostly at clerical and secretarial levels. Time and again women find it extremely difficult to obtain administrative or management assignments of the kind usually available to their male counterparts.

A current, new procedure at some business schools in the United States merits some consideration by business schools in South Africa: management internships for women before enrolling for post-graduate management training programmes. Preparation of women in sufficient numbers to meet the need for management ability at middle management levels especially, calls for innovative techniques. Internships are one of these.

Such a management internship for women should be beneficial to both the business school and the participating employer concerned. The business school will benefit by increasing well-qualified women applicants, while participating employers benefit by being introduced to women whose high intellectual caliber and purposeful commitment are already established, and whose employment involves no selection costs. The jobs on which such interns can work could be similar to those usually provided for young men starting out as executive assistants or management trainees.

Such women are regular employees of the companies which accept them. The business schools make the necessary introductions, but once this has been provided, these women negotiate their own job situations, including the nature of the work and the salary to be paid. Normal hiring practices are followed except in one detail: as well as making a job offer to a particular woman, employers are asked to confirm internship arrangements in a separate letter to the particular business school.

It is expected that each woman will make a genuine contribution, and that hard work and reliability on her part will strike a balance with the responsiveness and interest of the company employing her. The exact duration of internships varies, but is specified in advance in each case.

Deferred admission to post-graduate management training programmes according to the above procedure, provides an opportunity, not only to evaluate the experience of the internship at the end of the prescribed internship period, but also to compare it with the experience of those women who found their own jobs.