

Lawrence Appley, the president of the American Management Association defined it neatly a few years ago. He said, "Management is simply the business of getting other people to do the things that must be done." If that is management, communication must be the very heart and soul of managing any enterprise. How on earth can we get other people to do the things that must be done if we cannot communicate with them?

If the data I have just given you are a little frightening, I would like to worry you further. What kind of efficiency do you think we have from the bottom up to the top in these industrial managements? You can hunt a long time in many a business and not find one, single open channel of communication from the bottom up to the board of directors. Now, fortunately, that is not universally true. General Motors, General Electric, the Telephone Companies, and most of our forward-looking companies in America to day have become much exercised about upward communication. They are now recognizing, apparently, that they can make more money, and they can be more efficient in their production, if they can keep track of what the people down at the bottom are thinking about what their worries, problems, fears, and ideas are. They have tried out technique after technique to establish some kind of a system of upward communication.

I have not time to delineate all these for you. I would just like to name them. The oldest system for upward communication is to shake hands with all the boys on the payroll Monday morning and ask each fellow about the wife, the old Buick he drives, and the kid at Notre Dame, and you can kind of get a finger on his pulse, so to speak. This works swell if you have only four men on your payroll. If you have more than that it gets too cumbersome to use.

Industry had to lay it aside, by and large, and they adopted a second technique for upward communication, and that is to have an open meeting of management and labor with each man instructed that, if he has a gripe, to stand up and speak his piece in public. It seemed like a great idea. It fell flat on its face. The thing wrong with it is that no man likes to air his primary grievance in front of his immediate supervisor. He is worried about getting too emotional over it. If he talks at all he will talk about his secondary complaint or his tertiary one, but he is not about to get overemotional in front of his boss.