

Good writing 'an underrated executive skill'

"I don't need to write well," one executive insists. "My secretary corrects all my mistakes. I just make the big decisions."

One mistake his secretary should correct is the notion that writing skills aren't important to the executive, Henry H. Beam explains in Human Resources Management, a quarterly publication of the University of Michigan graduate school of business administration.

Beam, as assistant professor of management at Western Michigan University and a former executive and management consultant, calls good writing "an underrated executive skill."

According to a recent survey of busi-

ness school deans and large company personnel directors, poor writing skills are the most common weakness of young executives. The need to correct this deficiency was ranked ahead of gaining proficiency in such fields as finance or computer use by those polled.

Beam insists that "there are many good reasons for executives to write well and none for them to write poorly."

He cites three specific times in every executive's career when writing skills play an important and sometimes decisive role:

1. Getting the job: "Employers form lasting impressions on the basis

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— Henry H. Beam
professor of management

of what they see and know of a job candidate. The first item a prospective employer is likely to see is your letter of inquiry or your resume. If it is well presented, it will make a good first impression, and first impressions are lasting — they don't rapidly change. On the other hand, a poorly prepared letter of

inquiry or resume with incorrect grammar, spelling errors, improper format will put you at a disadvantage."

2. Accelerating promotion opportunities: "Once on the job, new hires rarely see the vice president who so attentively look them to lunch while they were being recruited. However, most

new hires will soon have a chance to write a memorandum or report that will be read by one or more of their superiors several steps up the line. But good writing skills can do even more than provide early exposure to top management for young executives. Such skills may actually tip the scales of accelerated promotion in their favor."

The author cites two examples: Alfred P. Sloan's "Organization Study" transformed General Motors and earned Sloan its top executive position; Harry B. Cunningham launched Kmart stores and his leadership of them with a similar report to company directors.

3. Helping others get hired or pro-

moted: "Once established in your own career, your writing skills can be an invaluable asset when writing letters of recommendation or completing performance appraisals on your subordinates."

Good writing is important even in routine letters and memorandums and can be instrumental in making day-to-day job performance more effective, Beam adds.

The author offers some tips for those who wish to improve their writing skills:

- Have a knowledgeable person comment on your writing.
- Study the style of effective writers in your field.

Pipe breakdown slows gas inflation

Consumers Power Co. gas customers will get a temporary reprieve from higher bills for Algerian gas following a pipeline breakdown at Arzew, Algeria.

The pipeline isn't expected to be fixed until late October or early November, said Dwight H. Seely, chairman of the suburban utility's supplier, Trunkline LNG Co.

Initial deliveries of the Algerian LNG (liquefied natural gas) to Lake Charles, La., aren't expected for about 13 days after pipeline repairs are completed.

and cubic feet of Algerian gas. The gas contract itself is open for renegotiation once "normal flow" begins, explained a spokesman for the Houston-based Panhandle Eastern Corp., parent firm of Trunkline LNG.

"The possibility does exist, of course, that they may want to renegotiate that price," said the spokesman.

THE PRICE, \$1.30 when the Panhandle-Algerian contract was signed in 1973, is linked to the prices of No. 2 and No. 6 fuel oil at the New York Harbor and to a comparison between the value of the dollar and a mixed marketbasket of European currencies.

When oil rises and the dollar falls, LNG prices escalate. Should oil fall and the dollar increase in value, LNG prices would decline.

Consumers says its customers can now expect to see the first higher LNG prices in their December bills.

THE DELAY means a bill reduction of about 8 percent — \$6 a month — for average budget plan customers, who utility spokesmen say represent about 20 percent of Consumers' residential gas users.

But the price break, temporary at best, may be followed by further increases in the price of \$7.38 per thou-

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