

THIRD EDITION

TEXTBOOK OF

OFFICE
MANAGEMENT

LEFFINGWELL AND ROBINSON

T M H EDITION

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TEXTBOOK OF OFFICE MANAGEMENT

BY

WILLIAM H. LEFFINGWELL

*Late President, The Taylor Society and
National Office Management Association*

AND

EDWIN M. ROBINSON

*Professor of Management, Boston University
Formerly General Office Manager, B. Kuppenheimer & Company
The Liquid Carbonic Company*



THIRD EDITION



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TEXTBOOK OF OFFICE MANAGEMENT

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To

**THE NATIONAL OFFICE
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION**

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

There is probably nothing new in office management as such. This does not mean that all office managers or all those who are responsible for the office-management function know all there is to know about office management. It does mean that there has been published or presented in one form or another—magazine articles, books, conferences, proceedings, reports, surveys, and college and university classes—practically every angle of office-management theory and practice.

The wealth of material available may be appreciated when it is realized that the bibliographies published since 1922 by the National Office Management Association alone total 314 pages of small type. Reckoning an average of 30 references to a page makes a total of 9,420 references to material that has been published on office management.

In addition to the 870-page handbook sponsored by the association in 1947, there were brought out in that year revisions of four other texts in the field. Supplementing the association's monthly magazine, the *Forum*, and its *Annual Proceedings*, all of the more than 100 local chapters schedule monthly meetings with papers presented by members and others possessing general or specific experiences in or knowledges of office-management practices. Many of these papers are printed for local distribution to chapter members. Some of the chapters also hold annual meetings and issue and publish reports of the proceedings.

It is obvious that if a student of office management should attempt to absorb all the available material on the subject he would soon find himself swamped in detail and overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task. Furthermore, because of differing viewpoints and experiences of different individuals, he would encounter puzzling contradictions with little or no guide to a wise choice of either policies or procedures. Every individual who has had experience in office management is to a certain extent limited in his viewpoint to his own experience. Not everyone is capable of taking a detached viewpoint and evaluating experiences, opinions, theories, and policies for what they may be

worth. Even the management consultants do not always agree with each other.

For the reasons stated, it is necessary, if one is not to give up in despair or make unnecessary and expensive moves, to provide some method by which the office manager, whether experienced or inexperienced, may determine for himself what should be done and how it should be done. The purpose of the present revision of Mr. Leffingwell's *Textbook of Office Management* is to provide such a guide. The material here presented has been arranged in logical, consecutive order and furnishes a sound foundation and a substantial superstructure for the orderly study and mastery of office management.

With such a foundation and superstructure the student of office management—whether he be beginner or experienced—will be able to appraise and evaluate for himself the worth of plans and ideas as they may apply to his particular problems. Indeed, in most if not all cases he will find that this book gives him all that is needed for the solution of any office-management problem as such. It may not give him all the answers—that would be too much to expect—but it will show him how to *obtain* the answers, thereby strengthening his own mastery of the subject and giving him the satisfaction of applying his own knowledge.

Since Mr. Leffingwell's principles of scientific office management were published in 1921, they have been reproduced and referred to year after year without change. This is not surprising when it is realized that Mr. Leffingwell's principles are based upon the scientific method, which is acknowledged by all scientists and researchers to be the accepted way of approaching the solution of any problem.

This revision of the *Textbook*, like the two previous editions, is based upon the scientific method. It is believed that, like the earlier editions, it will make many new friends in addition to continuing to please the old ones, who have been very generous and complimentary in their praise of the work. The author is grateful for this privilege.

EDWIN M. ROBINSON

WEST ROXBURY, MASS.
March, 1950

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

With the rapidly mounting volume of office work now being done, and the equally rapid increase in the number of office workers required to do it, effective office management is needed more than ever, for two reasons:

First, to be sure that the work is done quickly and well.

Second, to eliminate unnecessary work which causes delays and increases expenses without justification.

The office manager's task, then, is to get the office work done well, quickly, and at a reasonable cost. To be able to do this, he must know:

1. How to analyze the office requirements of the organization he is serving.
2. How to plan and lay out the work to be done.
3. How to select and assign competent office workers to do the work.
4. How to direct and instruct them in their duties.
5. How to control all the office operations for which he is responsible.
6. How to control and keep down the expense of all these items.

There is no room here for stumbling, for "trial-and-error" solutions. There is a pressing need for swift, sure-footed attack, for clear thinking, and for positive, intelligent action. More than ever is there a need for trained office managers who are able to apply the principles of management to the problems confronting them.

The problem of teaching office management revolves around two factors: determining the best order of presentation, and then presenting the material so that it may not be too difficult to understand, absorb, and master. Mastery of the subject is essential for the best results. Why try for anything less?

As a further aid to this mastery, nearly seven hundred questions have been prepared, covering adequately and searchingly every phase of office management, as presented in the text. In addition, some forty problems are included, thus providing the student with an opportunity to try himself and his knowledge. The illustrations have been chosen advisedly; they will bear close examination and re-examination.

To supplement his study of the text, the student should familiarize himself with the growing body of literature on office management, as represented by the reports and publications of the National Office Management Association and the American Management Association. Membership in one or both organizations will bring even more. It will bring the member into contact with office managers in active service, men and women who are in daily contact with the pressing problems of managing their offices effectively and economically.

Association membership will also provide the opportunity to ask questions; and the student member will find that office managers are just as eager to learn as he is. He will enjoy the mutual exchange of experience and theory under the stimulus of good fellowship. He will sit at the feet of nationally and internationally known authorities. Those students who had the privilege of hearing Mr. Leffingwell on his visits to Boston will never forget the experience.

As the student progresses in his mastery of the subject, he will find that not only will he come to have an increasing appreciation of what good office management involves, but, as a result of the systematic, step-by-step advance, he will eventually find himself able to approach with confidence any office organization or office-management problem and to analyze it and synthesize the answer, whether he ever heard of a similar case or not. After all, one test of thorough instruction is the confidence with which the student tackles a problem, applying the scientific method of attack. The purpose of this revision is not to change or even to restate the management principles which Mr. Leffingwell so well propounded and so ably demonstrated. Those principles have the same force and effect now as when they were first published in 1921. It is, perhaps, both singular and appropriate that the man who edited William Henry Leffingwell's first book, *Scientific Office Management*, should be the one to revise and bring up to date the last book of the man who first gave him a vision of the possibilities of properly organized and administered office work through the scientific method. The disciple is grateful for the privilege of sharing in the teachings of the master.

At this time the author wishes to acknowledge his sincere gratitude to William H. Evans, Secretary of the National Office Management Association, who read the entire text in manuscript form and offered many very valuable suggestions.

EDWIN M. ROBINSON

WEST ROXBURY, MASS.
January, 1943

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

The principles outlined in this work are the result of a long experience in "the harness" both as a clerical worker and, later, as an office manager. They were, for the most part, formulated some fifteen or twenty years ago and have been tested by a long and varied practice as consulting management engineer. This long trial has not caused any variation in their essentials, and while they are exemplified in most of my other writings on the subject, they are here presented in a more concise form, being especially adapted as a textbook for use in business schools and colleges. It may be mentioned here that, in all the years that have passed, they have never been called in question by office managers, who have found them invariably successful when put into actual practice.

This result of course might be expected, as they are, in essence, but the principles of scientific management formulated by that famous industrial scientist, Frederick Winslow Taylor, here applied to the conduct of the clerical office, and, like all scientific principles, they have naturally demonstrated their universal applicability.

Despite the current popular opinion that the office manager needs to know only a lot of systems and machines, there is an ever-growing group of executives who believe that the management of an office is quite as important a job as the management of a factory or any other industrial enterprise. Numerous instances may be cited where the managers of large offices have, by a consistent and logical use of these principles, saved upward of \$100,000 a year for their companies.

The young man entering business today need have no hesitancy in preparing himself for the position of office manager, for that position has proved a stepping stone to offices of great responsibility for many of our present leading executives.

To the student I leave the thought, originally, I believe, expressed by Aristotle, that "what we have to learn, we learn by doing." He should grasp every opportunity to visit offices and observe what goes on. He should eagerly accept a clerical position. If he is alert he

will find, even in the best managed offices, violations of some of the principles here enunciated (for no office is perfect) which, if corrected, would result in better service or more economical management or both. Let him not too hastily criticize, however, for a few diplomatic questions will show him that the correction of such violations is by no means a simple matter, but requires research, time, patience, and often a high degree of executive management. To discover a fault is easy; to correct it is often very difficult.

WILLIAM HENRY LEFFINGWELL

WESTFIELD, N. J.

December, 1931

CONTENTS

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION	vii
PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION	ix
PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION	xi
I. THE RELATION OF THE OFFICE TO GENERAL BUSINESS	1
II. THE MODERN CONCEPTION OF OFFICE MANAGEMENT	26
III. ORGANIZATION, ADMINISTRATION, AND MANAGEMENT	51
IV. THE CONTROL OF OFFICE WORK	66
V. OFFICE ROUTINES AND THEIR CONSTRUCTION	81
VI. FLOW OF WORK	106
VII. FACILITATING THE PERFORMANCE OF WORK—OFFICE SERVICE—MAIL AND MESSENGER	114
VIII. CORRESPONDENCE AND TRANSCRIBING	143
IX. OFFICE RECORDS AND FILING	180
X. THE DESIGN AND CONTROL OF OFFICE FORMS	211
XI. STATIONERY AND OFFICE SUPPLIES	236
XII. OFFICE DESKS AND DESK SYSTEMS	258
XIII. OFFICE MACHINES	282
XIV. PROVIDING OFFICE SPACE	319
XV. WORKING CONDITIONS	335
XVI. OFFICE ARRANGEMENT	364
XVII. THE OFFICE WORKER AND HIS JOB	382
XVIII. THE EMPLOYMENT OF CLERICAL WORKERS	410
XIX. EMPLOYEE TESTING	429
XX. THE TRAINING OF CLERICAL EMPLOYEES	449
XXI. THE OFFICE MANUAL	467
XXII. COMPENSATION OF OFFICE EMPLOYEES	483
XXIII. SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS	513

XXIV. THE MEASUREMENT OF OFFICE WORK	528
XXV. THE SETTING OF STANDARDS	548
XXVI. PLANNING AND SCHEDULING OFFICE WORK	573
XXVII. KEEPING OFFICE EXPENSE DOWN	592
APPENDIX. CHECK LISTS FOR OFFICE MANAGERS	607
INDEX	627

"The office has come to be recognized as a production unit whose efficiency is relatively as important as that of the manufacturing division."—HENRY BRUERE.

I

THE RELATION OF THE OFFICE TO GENERAL BUSINESS

Office management, as a function, is that branch of the art and science of management which is concerned with the efficient performance of office work, whenever and wherever that work is to be done. Office work is concerned primarily with the records of the enterprise—making records, using records, and preserving them for future reference. These records may be the history of transactions of the enterprise, represented by the accounts, by correspondence, by contracts, by orders, by inventories, by plans and schedules, by reports, and by written and printed memorandums of all kinds.

Just as bricks cannot be made without straw, neither can office records be made or preserved without adequate facilities for doing so. Office management is, therefore, responsible for providing the necessary facilities and equipment for making and preserving records.

Records may be made on paper, cards, photographic film, or punched cards and may be preserved in binders, drawers, boxes, or shelves. They may be made by hand or by machine. They may be made in a place called "the office," or they may be made anywhere else. Sometimes the term "clerical" is used synonymously with the term "office" to indicate the fact that the work is clerical work, whether it is done by a clerk in a place called "the office," by the foreman in a factory, or by a salesman on the road. The essential feature is the work itself, not who does it or where it is done. *If it is office or clerical work in one place, it is office or clerical work everywhere, regardless of where the work is done or who does it.* The ability to recognize office work as such, wherever it is done and whoever is doing it, is often the first step toward improving the performance of that work. That is, the principles applicable to

A FEW OF THE RECORDS KEPT BY OFFICES

Accounting records

- of purchases and sales
- of receipts and payments
- of changes in capital assets
- of costs of operation
- of profits and losses

Card lists of customers and prospects

- Calls made
- Letters written
- Sales literature sent out
- Orders taken
- Shipments made
- Complaints received
- Adjustments made

Lists of suppliers and vendors

- Items for sale (catalogues, price lists quotations)
- Purchases made
- Deliveries received
- Bills received and paid
- Complaints made
- Adjustments received

Lists of employees

- Information about them (application blanks and references)
- Rates of pay
- How they do their work
- Progress in the company

*Lists of materials (inventories)**Lists of equipment (condition, repairs, etc.)**Insurance records*

- Dates when policies expire
- Extent of insurance coverage

Production records

- Plans and schedules
- Orders of work

Advertising records

- Schedules of insertions
- Results obtained from advertisements

Salesmen's records

- Routes
- Expenses
- Sales
- Commissions

the performance of office work in one place are usually applicable to the performance of the same work elsewhere.

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES OF OFFICE MANAGEMENT

Since records are made by human beings, office management also includes the function of personnel, that is, determining what abilities are needed for doing the office work effectively, providing those abilities in the form of competent individuals, and directing and supervising their efforts.

Likewise, since one of the factors contributing to effective performance is comfortable working conditions, office management also includes providing good air, adequate light, comfortable working temperatures, enough space to move around in, clean surroundings, and the absence of disturbing factors, such as noise.

One of the most important kinds of records which form the basis of office work is written communications, such as letters, telegrams, memorandums, and messages of all kinds. These papers are received at intervals during the day from the post office, the telegraph company, and from individuals in all parts of the organization. In order that prompt and adequate attention may be given to these communications, office management is responsible for seeing that they are received early, taken immediately to those individuals who are concerned, and handled promptly and adequately. This involves fetching or receiving the mail from the post office and telegrams from the telegraph company; it involves picking up the messages from wherever they originate within the organization and promptly carrying them to their indicated destinations; it likewise involves the picking up of letters intended for mailing and seeing that they are mailed in seasonable time. This means providing a competent messenger service.

Because the telephone is a very important form of communication, office management is responsible for providing satisfactory telephone service.

Nearly every organization from time to time has occasion to make copies of records or communications. Office management is responsible for providing adequate and satisfactory duplicating service.

In the performance of office work, various kinds of stationery and office supplies are used. Office management is responsible for specifying the most suitable items for the purpose, keeping an adequate supply on hand, disbursing them as needed, and guiding their use without waste.

In many concerns, particularly the larger ones, the bulk of the routine letters are dictated in what may be called a central correspondence department, staffed by competent letter writers who know how to phrase an idea or thought most expressively and effectively. Office management is responsible not only for providing this service, but for seeing that the correspondents are trained and adequately supervised. Even where the handling of correspondence is not centralized, office management still has the responsibility of trying to improve the quality of the letters that are written.

Just as there are advantages in having all correspondence handled by a group of expert letter writers, so are there distinct advantages in having all dictated material transcribed in a central stenographic and transcribing department comprised of expert stenographers and typists under adequate supervision. Such a department would handle all the stenographic work of the organization, with the possible exception of those instances where certain executives have their own secretaries. Office management is responsible for providing this service.

The same principles apply to the preservation of records, correspondence, and other papers. By having a central filing department, staffed with filing experts, papers which are to be filed may be promptly classified, indexed, sorted, and put into temporary or permanent storage places (that is, folders on shelves or in cabinets), and promptly found when desired. Office management is responsible for providing this service.

Machines and equipment get out of order, break down, and need repair. Office management is responsible not only for selecting and providing suitable, adequate, and efficient office equipment, but also for the repair, maintenance, and replacement of office machines and equipment.

The person responsible for seeing that the office work is done is exercising the function of office management, whether he is called the office manager, the chief clerk, the head of a department, or the supervisor of a section. The principles and techniques that underlie all successful *management* also apply to *office management*, with, of course, due consideration to the differences in personnel, methods, work, equipment, working conditions, and so on. If one will keep in mind at all times, therefore, that office management is management applied to one of the functions of the business, just as sales management is management principles and techniques applied to sales, credit management the principles and techniques of management applied to credits, and so on, he will find that the same principles and techniques are generally

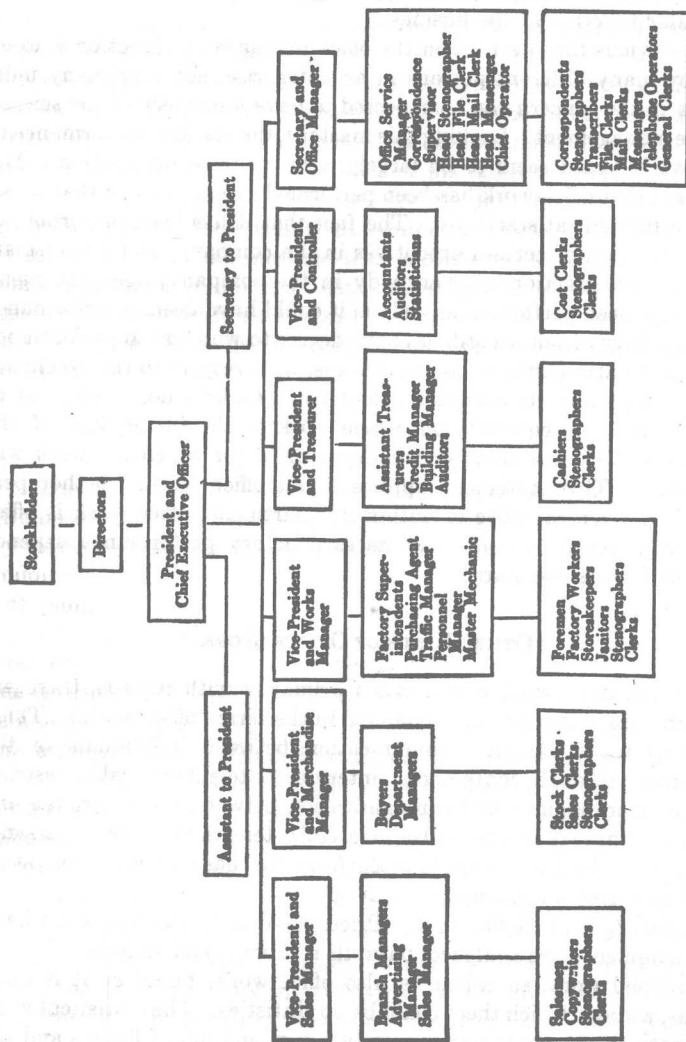


FIG. 1. The organization chart of a business. (From E. M. Robinson, *Business Organization and Practice*, p. 71, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1945.)