

Oct 3, 1974  
Edward Shuman

How Much for the Whistle?

Herb Bennett had just cleaned off his desk and was looking down from his office window onto the streets of New York. He knew that the "Executive Evaluation Committee" had completed their review. He was sure of the results. Hadn't he done his usually efficient job of running his marketing division? He would get a nice salary increase and the extra bonus. This was his 20th year with the Company, and the 18th time he had met the Company quota! Now, somehow, it didn't seem important! Everyone else had left the office, and as the elevator rushed him down from the 35th floor of the Company's Executive Suite, he was struggling with some questions that had been surfacing more and more often of late. As he made his way to the Subway, and later to catch the commuter train, his mind was searching for some answers. It was after seven o'clock, ~~and~~ before he had picked up his car at the station and driven home to his wife and two children. He hardly noticed his family, so intent was he on his thoughts. It seemed to Herb that he had some important decisions to make.

He thought, "At 42 years of age, I am considered a success by all who know me". The raise he had received was real and tangible evidence to his success. And as further proof of his success, didn't he live in a lovely two story home, own the required two automobiles, belong to the Country Club, even if there were never time to play golf, or to enjoy the Club House and the pool with his family?

Herb remembered how happy and proud his father and mother had been when he graduated from college. They were even more pleased when he had

been offered a job with the "Company" and a place in the executive training program. It meant that their son had escaped from the farm and the hard labor they had always had to accept. Every raise in salary, every added advantage that those raises had afforded had always been observed and applauded by both his parents and the friends back home. Yes, he was a success, but the strange feeling that there should be more to his life kept coming back, and today it had refused to go away. The new raise, and the responsibilities that he knew came with it seemed to be another chain that would bind him to a future much like the past, and he felt a real awareness that he was losing his freedom.

It becomes apparent from Herb's situation that there is a conflict. What is that conflict? Could it be that the price of success in our world is a loss of freedom? Herb is facing the reality of it in the mid-stream of life.

Our young folk, the "new generation" are questioning the value system that created the situation, and are insisting that they must be free to respond to change, and not be programmed.

The dream of individual freedom coupled with individual success is a vital part of the American Dream. We still hold fast to it, but in many ways it exists only as a dream.

There was a time in our history when man was free to find success and freedom in his work. A time when he was free to seek his own happiness through individual efforts, free from old world traditions, customs, and authority. Free to find himself in pursuit of his own self-interest. He was a man only as he proved himself as an individual. He faced other men and nature with a faith that morality, hard work, and self-denial

would bring him real success. He believed in the individual, himself: and he believed in government, but only as a last resort.

Things change, and man's job changed; he was no longer an individual doing his job, but he became a small part, a worker for new systems for the production of goods. The industrial age, the machine age, the age of technology, and computer age, all played their parts in separating the average worker from a feeling of real self-worth. This lack of self-worth, and lack of feeling of self-satisfaction from the job lead the worker to seek that satisfaction in something else.

What was that something else? Technology has made the worker into a unit of production, and to support the system he had to become a consumer. His value system had to be changed in such a way that the material products of technology would become substituted values. The workers' worth and status became identified with what he could consume or what he could own. It mattered little if he needed it, or could actually afford it.

The system of credit had to be changed to support this new life style. Production couldn't wait for savings to create purchasing power. So, purchasing power was created by new and innovative methods of credit. The "codfish" eyes of the old Banker were softened, and the Banker became a salesman, selling credit. The Banker is no longer that conservative member of society, the place he held in your and my childhood. He has shed his black suit and taken on the personality of the Fifth Avenue promoter. He helps to make the systems go, and I, for one, am glad to know him.

The consumer economy had to want what the factory could produce. It would serve no good purpose if what the consumer wanted was not being produced or at least "on the drawing board". This gave birth to the

"persuaders". The mass media became available and the "professional ad man" became its principle support. The full force of the mass media was to "educate" the consumer.

The educational system was not left out, it changed its purpose from education to training. Training future workers for the production-market economy.

The developments outlined above functioned within our free enterprise and grew with little governmental interference until 1933. Many persons, among them, Vanderbilt, Carnegie, Harriman, Ford, emerged as leaders; with absolute power over their company. Copper "Kings" and railroad "Barons" had developed an American aristocracy, with power envied by European royalty.

Franklin D. Roosevelt in his first hundred days legislation under the title, "The New Deal", created the first awareness that there was a "public interest". Since 1933 we have seen the development of the new corporate state, and the power it has accumulated to regulate the lives of you and me.

You and I have adjusted to these changes, or in more recent years, ignored them, without too much difficulty. Our youth are facing changes without power or experience to deal with it. This accelerated pace of change has resulted in a communication gap and we find our youth being members of a culture substantially different from our own.

In the fields of science and technology, more progress was made between 1900 to 1950 than in all previously recorded history of the human race. Between 1950 to 1965 we are told that science and technology made more advances than in the first fifty years of this century. It is

estimated that two-thirds of all scientists who ever lived are alive today, and working to discover new techniques that will accelerate change.

We in the U.S. are in the midst of the first post-industrial society. This means that services to people in the form of intellectual and professional services are fast becoming a greater part of our Gross National Product. This is a change that our generation finds hard to grasp. We remember the great depressions and our struggles to achieve personal and national security through the production of material wealth. Our great success has created the generation gap. The younger generation cares less about things, and is more interested in seeking ways to restructure our organizations in both government and business, in order to bring about social justice. The younger generation has observed "success" in our generation and has not been impressed with the results. We can be pleased that we have been able to transfer our basic moral principles to them, and by some definitions they are considered to be the most moral generation in history. They have principles regarding the real values which they follow, principles that are above those that we have preached but could not carry out in our fight for success in a materialistic society.

Our success has been so great that many of the brightest of the younger generation have a sense of guilt. They are aware that they have not earned the high standard of living and comfort that is available to 80% of the American population. They see the other 20% of our population left without a fair share of the "good life" and ask, "Why?". Knowing that, they feel a guilt, and feel morally compelled to achieve social justice. They have a strong feeling that success is not material wealth, and many have refused to start in the steps of our generation in the search for dollars. They have

rejected the value system that has motivated you and I to achieve our brands of success. Many are looking forward to fields of social service that can offer service to their fellowman. These pursuits are never to bring to them the symbols of status that lured our generation to want to be company presidents, sales managers, bankers, doctors, lawyers, etc.

At this point, before you begin to ask about whom I am speaking, let me say, certainly not anyone over twenty-five, for most have joined the race for just these very things - status and those symbols of status are important to them. Our reference cannot be to them. We are talking of the generation of college age persons. It is agreed that all of us were imbued, to some degree, with the same idealism that our college age youth have today. We lost it when thrown into the "real" world, not unlike the loss that has been suffered by each generation. This explains why no one over 30 can be trusted. It would appear to me that the few persons of every generation that take a part of that idealism with them into their thirties, and yes, into their forties, fifties, and throughout their whole life, are the ones that are truly successful. Our task is, not to reject the idealism of our youth, but to help them hold on to it - - and when they become wiser by experience they will be better equipped to face the changing world, to change it for the better, and to be successful in their world.

There has never been a group of people like our youth of today. They know more, think more, and think differently. The good college teaches them what formerly they would have gotten in graduate school, and in a good high school much of what is taught today was formerly taught in colleges. They are not wiser but they are different. They have seen more changes in their few years than any previous group of young people. They could not

escape the effects of change, they have had T.V. since infancy! And have been listening, and are more aware of the world they live in, and its problems than most of us want to admit.

They see the problems: economic, social, racial - - and have not the power or wisdom to solve them. They are emotionally confused. Some of them have turned to drugs. It has been pointed out that they usually turn to drugs to cope with their emotional problems, and that the greater portion of them use mind expanding types of drugs. In contrast, we, their elders, turn to the sedatives. This would indicate they are searching for answers, while we elders are trying to find ways to endure, or to escape responsibility for the world by the use of alcohol, sedatives, and tranquilizers.

We, the over thirty-plus, have a strong identification with the song made famous a few years ago, by the Lemmon-McCartney team, members of the "Beatles", "Yesterday, all my troubles seem so far away - - and I believe in yesterday". We want to escape into yesterday.

Our youth look forward to tomorrow and its changes, and are determined to help direct that change for a better world. We make a grave mistake if we think they are like we were at their age and that someday they will be like we now are. This is just not so! We want them to be more than we are, even while we lament, "What is to become of this generation"?

Charles A. Reich, a law professor of Yale, published a book in 1970 entitled "The Greening of America". Reading this book can be a "mind-blower" for the over 30 reader. It will make you question some things that our generation has long accepted. In Reich's final chapter, which takes the title of the book, he points out that there is a new consciousness and a new generation being raised up. This consciousness could only have come as

our capacity to produce exceeded our needs, as a result of the age of technology. In this new world there are new values and priorities, man is envisioned as supreme, and using the benefits of technology to serve himself and his fellowman. Man will be in control once again and man will win freedom, even from his machines!

The future is really all there is and change is the only thing we can be sure that will prevail. Our opportunity now is to help our youth consider what they will take with them into that future. Hopefully, a large part of their idealism can be carried and each can experience his freedom as he works for the freedom of his fellowmen.

Herb awoke; he was not aware that he had fallen asleep. It was Saturday morning and he had the week-end before him. He remembered the questions with which he had been laboring the night before, but, somehow, the questions weren't nearly so important. His children would have the best opportunities he could give them and they would not have the pressures he was having to experience. He would see to it that they would find the "real success" that, somehow, had eluded him. He hoped the office didn't call, for he felt a need for a few hours of freedom.

*Herb A. Hummer*  
10-3-74