

Chapter Ten TO EMPLOYERS

One of our friends, whose gripping story you have read, has spent much of his life in the world of big business. He has hired and fired hundreds of men. He knows the alcoholic as the employer sees him. His present views ought to prove exceptionally useful to business men everywhere.

But let him tell you:

I was at one time assistant manager of a corporation department employing sixty-six hundred men. One day my secretary came in saying that Mr. B - insisted on speaking with me. I told her to say that I was not interested. I had warned this man several times that he had but one more chance. Not long afterward he had called me from Hartford on two successive days, so drunk he could hardly speak. I told him he was through - finally and forever.

My secretary returned to say that it was not Mr. B - on the phone; it was Mr. B - 's brother, and he wished to give me a message. I still expected a plea for clemency, but these words came through the receiver: "I just wanted to tell you Paul jumped from a hotel window in Hartford last Saturday. He left us a note saying you were the best boss he ever had, and that you were not to blame in any way."

Another time, as I opened a letter which lay on my desk, a newspaper clipping fell out. It was the obituary of one of the best salesman I ever had. After two weeks of drinking, he had placed his foot on the trigger of a loaded shotgun - the barrel was in his mouth. I had discharged him for drinking six weeks before.

Still another experience: A woman's voice came faintly over long distance from Virginia. She wanted to

know if her husband's company insurance was still in force. Four days before he had hanged himself in his woodshed. I had been obliged to discharge him for drinking, though he was brilliant, alert, and one of the best organizers I have ever known.

Here were three exceptional men lost to this world because I did not understand as I do now. Then I became an alcoholic myself! And but for the intervention of an understanding person, I might have followed in their footsteps. My downfall cost the business community unknown thousands of dollars, for it takes real money to train a man for an executive position. This kind of waste goes on unabated. Our business fabric is shot through with it and nothing will stop it but better understanding all around.

You, an employer, want to understand. Nearly every modern employer feels a moral responsibility for the well-being of his help, and he usually tries to meet these responsibilities. That he has not always done so for the alcoholic is easily understood. To him the alcoholic has often seemed to be a fool of the first magnitude. Because of the employee's special ability, or of his own strong personal attachment to him, the employer has sometimes kept such a man at work long beyond the time he ordinarily would. Some employers have tried every known remedy. More often, however, there is very little patience and tolerance. And we, who have imposed on the best of employers, can scarcely blame them if they have been short with us.

Here, for instance, is a typical example: An officer of one of the largest banking institutions in America knows I no longer drink. One day he told me about an executive of the same bank, who, from his description, was undoubtedly alcoholic. This seemed to me like an opportunity to be helpful. So I spent a good two hours talking about alcoholism, the malady. I described the symptoms and supported my statements with plenty of

evidence. His comment was: "Very interesting. But I'm sure this man is done drinking. He has just returned from a three-months' leave of absence, has taken a cure, looks fine, and to clinch the matter, the board of directors told him this was his last chance."

My rejoinder was that if I could afford it, I would bet him a hundred to one the man would go on a bigger bust than ever. I felt this was inevitable and that the bank was doing a possible injustice. Why not bring the man in contact with some of our alcoholic crowd? He might have a chance. I pointed out I had had nothing to drink whatever for three years, and this in the face of difficulties that would have made nine out of ten men drink their heads off. Why not at least afford him an opportunity to hear my story? "Oh no", said my friend, "this chap is either through with liquor, or he is minus a job. If he has your will power and guts, he will make the grade."

I wanted to throw up my hands in discouragement, for I saw that my banking acquaintance had missed the point entirely. He simply could not believe that his brother-executive suffered from a deadly malady. There was nothing to do but wait.

Presently the man did slip and, of course, was fired. Following his discharge, our group contacted him. Without much ado, he accepted our principles and procedure. He is undoubtedly on the high road to recovery. To me, this incident illustrates a lack of understanding and knowledge on the part of employers - lack of understanding as to what really ails the alcoholic, and lack of knowledge as to what part employers might profitably take in salvaging their sick employees.

To begin with, I think you employers would do well to disregard your own drinking experience, or lack of it. Whether you are a hard drinker, a moderate drinker, or a teetotaler, you have but little notion of the inner

workings of the alcoholic mind. Instead, you may have some pretty strong opinions, perhaps prejudices, based upon your own experiences. Those of you who drink moderately are almost certain to be more annoyed with an alcoholic than a total abstainer would be. Drinking occasionally, and understanding your own reactions, it is possible for you to become quite sure of many things, which, so far as the alcoholic is concerned, are not always so.

As a moderate drinker, you can take your liquor or leave it alone. Whenever you want to, you can control your drinking. Of an evening, you can go on a mild bender, get up in the morning, shake your head, and go to business. To you, liquor is no real problem. You cannot see why it should be to anyone else, save the spineless and stupid.

When dealing with an alcoholic, you have to fight an ingrained annoyance that he could be so weak, stupid and irresponsible. Even when you understand the malady better, you may still have to check this feeling and remember that your employee is very ill, being seldom as weak and irresponsible as he appears.

Take a look at the alcoholic in your organization. Is he not usually brilliant, fast-thinking, imaginative and likeable? When sober, does he not work hard and have a knack of getting things done? Review his qualities and ask yourself whether he would be worth retaining, if sober. And do you owe him the same obligation you feel toward other sick employees? Is he worth salvaging? If your decision is yes, whether the reason be humanitarian, or business, or both, then you will wish to know what to do.

The first part has to do with you. Can you stop feeling that you are dealing only with habit, with stubbornness, or a weak will? If you have difficulty about that I suggest you re-read chapters two and three of this

book, where the alcoholic sickness is discussed at length. You, as a business man, know better than most that when you deal with any problem, you must know what it is. Having conceded that your employee is ill, can you forgive him for what he has done in the past? Can you shelve the resentment you may hold because of his past absurdities? Can you fully appreciate that the man has been a victim of crooked thinking, directly caused by the action of alcohol on his brain?

I well remember the shock I received when a prominent doctor in Chicago told me of cases where pressure of the spinal fluid actually ruptured the brain from within. No wonder an alcoholic is strangely irrational. Who wouldn't be, with such a fevered brain? Normal drinkers are not so handicapped.

Your man has probably been trying to conceal a number of scrapes, perhaps pretty messy ones. They may disgust you. You may be puzzled by them, being unable to understand how such a seemingly above board chap could be so involved. But you can generally charge these, no matter how bad, to the abnormal action of alcohol on his mind. When drinking, or getting over a bout, an alcoholic, sometimes the model of honesty when normal, will do incredible things. Afterward, his revulsion will be terrible. Nearly always, these antics indicate nothing more than temporary abberations and you should so treat them.

This is not to say that all alcoholics are honest and upright when not drinking. Of course that isn't so, and you will have to be careful that such people don't impose on you. Seeing your attempt to understand and help, some men will try to take advantage of your kindness. If you are sure your man does not want to stop, you may as well discharge him, the sooner the better. You are not doing him a favor by keeping him on. Firing such an individual may prove a blessing to him. It may be just the jolt he needs. I know, in my own particular case, that nothing my

company could have done would have stopped me, for so long as I was able to hold my position, I could not possibly realize how serious my situation was. Had they fired me first, and had they then taken steps to see that I was presented with the solution contained in this book, I might have returned to them six months later, a well man.

But there are many men who want to stop right now, and with them you can go far. If you make a start, you should be prepared to go the limit, not in the sense that any great expense or trouble is to be expected, but rather in the matter of your own attitude, your understanding treatment of the case.

Perhaps you have such a man in mind. He wants to quit drinking, and you want to help him, even if it be only a matter of good business. You know something of alcoholism. You see that he is mentally and physically sick. You are willing to overlook his past performances. Suppose you call the man in and go at him like this:

Hit him point blank with the thought that you know all about his drinking, that it must stop. Say you appreciate his abilities, would like to keep him, but cannot, if he continues to drink. That you mean just what you say. And you should mean it too!

Next, assure him that you are not proposing to lecture, moralize, or condemn; that if you have done so formerly, it is because you misunderstood. Say, if you possibly can, that you have no hard feeling toward him. At this point, bring out the idea of alcoholism, the sickness. Enlarge on that fully. Remark that you have been looking into the matter. You are sure of what you say, hence your change of attitude, hence your willingness to deal with the problem as though it were a disease. You are willing to look at your man as a gravely-ill person, with this qualification - being perhaps fatally ill, does your man want to get well, and right now? You ask because many alcoholics, being warped

and drugged, do not want to quit. But does he? Will he take every necessary step, submit to anything to get well, to stop drinking forever?

If he says yes, does he really mean it, or down inside does he think he is fooling you, and that after rest and treatment he will be able to get away with a few drinks now and then? Probe your man thoroughly on these points. Be satisfied he is not deceiving himself or you.

Not a word about this book, unless you are sure you ought to introduce it at this juncture. If he temporizes and still thinks he can ever drink again, even beer, you may as well discharge him after the next bender which, if an alcoholic, he is certain to have. Tell him that emphatically, and mean it! Either you are dealing with a man who can and will get well, or you are not. If not, don't waste time with him. This may seem severe, but it is usually the best course.

After satisfying yourself that your man wants to recover and that he will go to any extreme to do so, you may suggest a definite course of action. For most alcoholics who are drinking, or who are just getting over a spree, a certain amount of physical treatment is desirable, even imperative. Some physicians favor cutting off the liquor sharply, and prefer to use little or no sedative. This may be wise in some instances, but for the most of us it is a barbaric torture. For severe cases, some doctors prefer a slower tapering-down process, followed by a health farm or sanitarium. Other doctors prefer a few days of de-toxication, removal of poisons from the system by cathartics, belladonna, and the like, followed by a week of mild exercise and rest. Having tried them all, I personally favor the latter, though the matter of physical treatment should, of course, be referred to your own doctor. Whatever the method, its object should be to thoroughly clear mind and body of the effects of alcohol. In competent hands, this seldom takes long, nor should it be very expensive. Your man is

entitled to be placed in such physical condition that he can think straight and no longer physically craves liquor. These handicaps must be removed if you are going to give him the chance you want him to have. Propose such a procedure to him. Offer to advance the cost of treatment, if necessary, but make it plain that any expense will later be deducted from his pay. Make him fully responsible; it is much better for him.

When your man accepts your offer, point out that physical treatment is but a small part of the picture. Though you are providing him with the best possible medical attention, he should understand that he must undergo a change of heart. To get over drinking will require a transformation of thought and attitude. He must place recovery above everything, even home and business, for without recovery he will lose both.

Show that you have every confidence in his ability to recover. While on the subject of confidence, tell him that so far as you are concerned, this will be a strictly personal matter. His alcoholic derelictions, the treatment about to be undertaken, these will never be discussed without his consent. Cordially wish him success and say you want to have a long chat with him on his return.

To return to the subject matter of this book: It contains, as you have seen, full directions by which your employee may solve his problem. To you, some of the ideas which it contains are novel. Perhaps some of them don't make sense to you. Possibly you are not quite in sympathy with the approach we suggest. By no means do we offer it as the last word on this subject, but so far as we are concerned, it has been the best word so far. Our approach often does work. After all, you are looking for results rather than methods. Whether your employee likes it or not, he will learn the grim truth about alcoholism. That won't hurt him a bit, though he does not go for the remedy at first.

I suggest you draw our book to the attention of the doctor who is to attend your patient during treatment. Ask that the book be read the moment the patient is able - while he is acutely depressed, if possible.

The doctor should approve a spiritual approach. And besides, he ought to tell the patient the truth about his condition, whatever that happens to be. The doctor should encourage him to acquire a spiritual experience. At this stage it will be just as well if the doctor does not mention you in connection with the book. Above all, neither you, the doctor, nor anyone should place himself in the position of telling the man he must abide by the contents of this volume. The man must decide for himself. You cannot command him, you can only encourage. And you will surely agree that it may be better to withhold~ any criticism you may have of our method until you see whether it works.

You are betting, of course, that your changed attitude and the contents of this book will turn the trick. In some cases it will, and in others it will not. But we think that if you persist, the percentage of successes will gratify you. When our work spreads and our numbers increase, we hope your employees may be put in personal contact with some of us, which, needless to say, will be more effective. Meanwhile, we are sure a great deal can be accomplished if you will follow the suggestions of this chapter.

On your employee's return, call him in and ask what happened. Ask him if he thinks he has the answer. Get him to tell you how he thinks it will work, and what he has to do about it. Make him feel free to discuss his problems with you, if he cares to. Show him you understand, and that you will not be upset by anything he wishes to say.

In this connection, it is important that you remain undisturbed if the man proceeds to tell you things which

shock you. He may, for example, reveal that he has padded his expense account, or that he has planned to take your best customers away from you. In fact, he may say almost anything if he has accepted our solution which, as you know, demands rigorous honesty. Charge this off as you would a bad account and start afresh with him. If he owes you money, make terms which are reasonable. From this point on, never rake up the past unless he wants to discuss it.

If he speaks of his home situation, be patient and make helpful suggestions. Let him see that he can talk frankly with you so long as he does not bear tales or criticize others. With the kind of employee you want to keep, such an attitude will command undying loyalty.

The greatest enemies of the alcoholic are resentment, jealousy, envy, frustration, and fear. Wherever men are gathered together in business, there will be rivalries, and, arising out of these, a certain amount of office politics. Sometimes the alcoholic has an idea that people are trying to pull him down. Often this is not so at all. But sometimes his drinking will be used as a basis of criticism.

One instance comes to mind in which a malicious individual was always making friendly little jokes of an alcoholic's drinking exploits. In another case, an alcoholic was sent to a hospital for treatment. Only a few knew of it at first, but within a short time, it was bill-boarded throughout the entire company. Naturally, this sort of thing decreases a man's chance of recovery. The employer should make it his business to protect the victim from this kind of talk if he can. The employer cannot play favorites, but he can always try to defend a man from needless provocation and unfair criticism.

As a class, alcoholics are energetic people. They work hard and they play hard. Your man will be on his mettle to make good. Being somewhat weakened, and faced

with physical and mental readjustment to a life which knows no alcohol, he may overdo. Don't let him work sixteen hours a day just because he wants to. Encourage him to play once in a while. Make it possible for him to do so. He may wish to do a lot for other alcoholics and something of the sort may come up during business hours. Don't begrudge him a reasonable amount of time. This work is necessary to maintain his sobriety.

After your man has gone along without drinking a few months, try to make use of his services with other employees who are giving you the alcoholic run-around - provided, of course, they are willing to have a third party in the picture. Don't hesitate to let an alcoholic who has recovered, but holds a relatively unimportant job, talk to a man with a better position. Being on radically different basis of life, he will never take advantage of the situatio

You must trust your man. Long experience with alcoholic excuses naturally makes you suspicious. When his wife next calls saying he is sick, don't jump to the conclusion he is drunk. If he is, and is still trying to recover upon our basis, he will presently tell you about it, even if it means the loss of his job. For he knows he must be honest if he would live at all. Let him see you are not bothering your head about him at all, that you are not suspicious, nor are you trying to run his life so he will be shielded from temptation to drink. If he is conscientiously following the Program of Recovery he can go anywhere your business may call him. Do not promote him, however, until you are sure.

In case he does stumble, even once, you will have to decide whether to let him go. If you are sure he doesn't mean business, there is no doubt you should discharge him. If, on the contrary, you are sure he is doing his utmost, you may wish to give him another chance. But you should feel under no obligation to do so, for your obligation has been well discharged already. In any

event, don't let him fool you, and don't let sentiment get the better of you if you are sure he ought to go.

There is another thing you might do. If your organization is a large one, your junior executives might be provided with this book. You might let them know you have no quarrel with the alcoholics of your organization. These juniors are often in a difficult position. Men under them are frequently their friends. So, for one reason or another, they cover these men, hoping matters will take a turn for the better. They often jeopardize their own positions by trying to help serious drinkers who should have been fired long ago, or else given an opportunity to get well.

After reading this book, a junior executive can go to such a man and say, "look here, Ed. Do you want to stop drinking or not? You put me on the spot every time you get drunk. It isn't fair to me or the firm. I have been learning something about alcoholism. If you are an alcoholic, you are a mighty sick man. You act like one. The firm wants to help you get over it, if you are interested. There is a way out, and I hope you have sense enough to try it. If you do, your past will be forgotten and the fact that you went away for treatment will not be mentioned. But if you cannot, or will not stop drinking, I think you ought to resign."

Your junior executive may not agree with the contents of our book. He need not, and often should not, show it to his alcoholic prospect. But at least he will understand the problem and will no longer be misled by ordinary promises. He will be able to take a position with such a man which is eminently fair and square. He will have no further reason for covering up an alcoholic employee.

It boils right down to this: No man should be fired just because he is alcoholic. If he wants to stop, he should be afforded a real chance. If he cannot, or does

not want to stop, he should usually be discharged. The exceptions are few.

We think this method of approach will accomplish several things for you. It will promptly bring drinking situations to light. It will enable you to restore good men to useful activity. At the same time you will feel no reluctance to rid yourself of those who cannot, or will not, stop. Alcoholism may be causing your organization considerable damage in its waste of money, men and reputation. We hope our suggestions will help you plug up this sometimes serious leak. We do not expect you to become a missionary, attempting to save all who happen to be alcoholic. Being a business man is enough these days. But we can sensibly urge that you stop this waste and give your worth-while man a chance.

The other day an approach was made to the vice-president of a large industrial concern. He remarked: "I'm mighty glad you fellows got over your drinking. But the policy of this company is not to interfere with the habits of our employees. If a man drinks so much that his job suffers, we fire him. I don't see how you can be of any help to us, for as you see, we don't have any alcoholic problem." This same company spends millions for research every year. Their cost of production is figured to a fine decimal point. They have recreational facilities. There is company insurance. There is a real interest, both humanitarian and business, in the well-being of employees. But alcoholism - well, they just don't have that.

Perhaps this is a typical attitude. We, who have collectively seen a great deal of business life, at least from the alcoholic angle, had to smile at this gentleman's opinion. He might be shocked if he knew how much alcoholism cost his organization a year. That company may harbor many actual or potential alcoholics. We believe that managers of large enterprises often have little idea how prevalent this problem is. Perhaps this

is a guess, but we have a hunch it's a good one. If you still feel your organization has no alcoholic problem, you might well take another look down the line. You may make some interesting discoveries.

Of course, this chapter refers to alcoholics, sick people, deranged men. What our friend, the vice-president, had in mind, was the habitual or whoopee drinker. As to them, his policy is probably sound, but as you see, he does not distinguish between such people and the alcoholic.

Being a business man, you might like to have a summary of this chapter. Here it is~ :

One: Acquaint yourself with the nature of alcoholism.

Two: Be prepared to discount and forget your man's past.

Three: Confidentially offer him medical treatment and cooperation, provided you think he wants to stop.

Four: Have the alcohol thoroughly removed from his system and give him a suitable chance to recover physically.

Five: Have the doctor in attendance present him with this book, but don't cram it down his throat.

Six: Have a frank talk with him when he gets back from his treatment, assuring him of your full support, encouraging him to say anything he wishes about himself, and making it clear the past will not be held against him.

Seven: Ask him to place recovery from alcoholism ahead of all else.

Eight: Don't let him overwork.

Nine: Protect him, when justified, from malicious gossip.

Ten: If, after you have shot the works, he will not stop, then let him go.

It is not to be expected that you give your alcoholic employee a disproportionate amount of time and attention. He is not to be made a favorite. The right kind of man, the kind who recovers, will not want this sort of thing. He will not impose upon you. Far from it. He will work like the devil, and thank you to his dying day.

Today, I own a little company. There are two alcoholic employees, who produce as much as five normal salesmen. But why not? They have a better way of life, and they have been saved from a living death. I have enjoyed every moment spent in getting them straightened out. You, Mr. Employer, may have the same experience!*

* See appendix - The Alcoholic Foundation. We may be able to carry on a limited correspondence.