

Skills of an Effective Administrator

By Robert L Katz, Harvard Business Review, September-October, 1974

Effective administration depends on three skills: **Technical, Interpersonal** and **Conceptual**.

At lower levels, technical and human skills are needed. At middle levels, human and conceptual skills become necessary. At the top, conceptual skills are of paramount importance.

Technical skills refer to methods, processes, procedures and techniques associated with the tasks that have to be completed.

Human skills refer to the ability to get along with people. Self-awareness, awareness of others and effective communication are the key components. People with good human skills will be sufficiently sensitive to the needs and motivation of others. When they take a decision, they will take into account how it affects the people around them.

Conceptual skills involve the ability to look at the business holistically, recognize how different functions are interdependent and understand how changes in one function will affect other functions. A chief executive who lacks technical or human skills may still be effective provided there are subordinates who have these skills. But if the CEO's conceptual skills are weak, the organization will run into problems.

Conceptual skills can be developed in various ways. One is to assign a particular responsibility to a subordinate and whenever she asks for help, coach her by asking questions instead of spoon-feeding. Another approach is to rotate people through different functions. A third approach is to put people in special assignments which involve inter departmental problems and interaction with senior executives.