

# *The Principle of Completed Staff Work*

*by John Stuart Edwards*

*Completed staff work is the study of a problem and presentation of a solution in such a form that all that remains to be done by the director is to indicate his approval or disapproval of the completed action. The more difficult the problem is, the greater is the tendency to present the problem to the director in piece-meal fashion. It is your duty to work out the details. You should not burden your director in the determination of those details, no matter how perplexing they may be. You may and should consult other staff. The product should, when presented to the director for approval, be worked out in finished form.*

*It is your job to advise the director what he ought to do, not to ask him what you ought to do. He needs answers, not questions. Your job is to study, write, restudy, and rewrite, until you have evolved a single proposed course of action – the most advantageous course of all that you have considered. The director then approves or disapproves.*

*Do not worry your director with long explanations and emails. Writing an email to your director does not constitute completed staff work, but writing an email for him to send to someone else does. Your views should be placed before him in finished form, so that he can make them his views simply by signing his name. In most cases, completed staff work produces a single document or presentation prepared for the director's use without accompanying comment. If the document stands on its own feet, it will speak for itself; if the director wants further comment or explanation, he will ask for it.*

*Completed staff work usually requires greater effort for the staff member, but it results in greater freedom and protection for the director. Moreover, it accomplishes two results:*

*(1) The director is protected against half-baked ideas, voluminous emails, and immature oral presentations.*

*(2) The staff member who has a valid, important proposal can more readily find receptive consideration.*

*The final test of completed staff work is this:*

*If you yourself were the director, would you be willing to sign the paper, presentation, email, position or proposal you have prepared? Would you stake your professional reputation on its being right?*

*If the answer would be "No," take it back and rework it, because it is not yet completed staff work.*