



WOULDN'T IT BE LOVERLY

Being in a somewhat wistful mood the other night, we set down our dream of a better world. Wouldn't it be lovely, we thought:

■ If there *were* such a thing as “instant editing”? In a way there is, of course, and it goes like this. At 10 A.M. the telephone rings and the staff person's voice—ingratiatingly, innocently, or truculently—informs us he has a 200-page report that must be edited and ready to show the partner by 2:30. He is bringing it right down.

Of course, we do what we can, and there seems little question that instant editing (like instant coffee) is better than no editing at all.

If only we were a little brighter, we keep thinking, we might be able to do a *real* editing job under these circumstances. But so far it is only a dream.

■ If there *were* a way for editors to teach associates how to organize their ideas?

This dream is especially painful in its plausibility. When a newcomer brings us Hashed Brown Observations and Scrambled Recommendations it ought to be the easiest thing in the world to dehash and unscramble the ideas, and return them to their own true shapes.

Well, we can sometimes unscramble the words, but it may turn out that the ideas weren't the right ones to begin with. The trouble usually goes back to the analysis of the client's problem and the acuity of the original thinking. We have only the writer's word for it, and with the best intentions in the world, he or she may be wrong. Teaching the new associate how to analyze problems remains the responsibility of his or her supervisor on the job. We can only help out with the words.

■ If the associate *would* learn company format? This, of course, is the wildest dream of all. ■

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