

Guide book for young entrants to Harris Lebus Ltd

It is an important stage in the life of any school person when the life of any young person when he or she leaves school and comes into industry.

The conditions of life in the two cases are very different and this little booklet has been written to help to make the changeover easy and pleasant and to give a few hints which should be found useful throughout life.

1. Start on the right foot

When you enter a new country, the first thing you should do is to learn all you can about it; about its geography – how to find your way around: about the people who inhabit it – who they are, how they live, what they do and why they do it: about their customs and laws – what they regard as right and wrong: about their history – how long they have been there, and whether they have earned respect or dislike.

It is no use living in a country unless you can be happy there. If you find out enough about the place and about the people, you can plan your own life so as to get the maximum good for yourself without doing anything which will interfere with the comfort or prosperity of those around you. If you want to be happy, it is necessary to do more than avoid breaking the laws; it is necessary to plan your actions so that you help those around you to reach the objects for which they are working and to further the good of the country in which you have chosen to live.

2. What country is it?

In your case, the country you have entered is “Industry” and the part of the country in which you are, is “Harris Lebus Ltd.” And, at this stage, on behalf of Messer’s Harris Lebus Ltd., we bid you welcome and we not only hope that you will enjoy your work with us but we shall do what we can to make this possible.

Now! What is this country like? Our branch of industry is that which makes furniture. Furniture is an important part of the home; it includes the table we eat off; the chair we sit on, the bed we sleep on, where we keep our camera or our lip-stick, our football jersey or our dance frock. In helping to make furniture, you will therefore have the satisfaction of knowing that you are not only earning your own living but that you are at the same time providing something which is useful to the whole community.

3. Our firms' tradition

Not only are Messer's Harris Lebus Ltd. Well known and respected in the furniture trade but they also occupy a very special position since their factory is the largest furniture factory in the world.

They were not always large. About one hundred years ago the firm started with one or two men but, by hard work, clear thinking, good management and making honest furniture at a reasonable price, the firm has gone to its present position where it has earned both the pleasure and the high responsibility of having a leading share in guiding the British Furniture Industry.

A good name, either for an individual or for a firm, is like a plant; it can grow and develop if it is given suitable care and training, but it will wither and die if injured or neglected. Our firm is rightly proud of its good name and, as you are now becoming part of the firm, you will have the power either to protect or to damage our good name.

4. It is not only big jobs which count

The first job which you are given will not be very difficult. If it appears to be too easy, you may even feel offended and think that you ought to have been given something more worthy of your ability. Have another look at the job. It is as easy as you think?

However simple a job may be, it can be done well or badly. Your ability will probably be judged from the way you do this simple job. If it is easy, you ought to be able to do it very well. If you are really quick and clever you ought to do that job quicker and better than it was ever done before. This will show whether you are suited for a more difficult operation.

For one reason or another, you may have to stay on this job for some time. If you continue, not only to do the work well, but to improve with the practice you are getting, we shall know that your patience and determination are good. Don't get the idea that because any job is easy, it is not worth doing well. Easy jobs are essential parts of our work as well as hard done ones. If you don't do the job, someone else must: if no one does it, we can't make furniture.

5. Where do we go from here?

Well, it all depends on where you want to go to, how keen you are to get there and how well you can stand up to the work of travelling. At present you may not have very clear ideas as to what positions will be available to you but as you get used to the new conditions you will be able to observe the older people with whom you may come in contact. See what kind of work they do. You will notice that some are doing work which is not very much harder than that which you could do yourself while others will be doing things which you will not even understand but which may appeal to you as being very interesting. Now, why is there this difference? Try to answer this important question for yourself. Notice what kind of people they are. You will see that there is a difference in character, in behaviour, in the amount they know and the way they think. Of course some people will have had as much greater opportunities than others. Not only have they been able to go to better schools but they have been fortunate in getting good training which taught them the way to train themselves. Even if you, yourself, have not had the best opportunities, this need not be a serious handicap. You will find that there are ample facilities for you to develop yourself and for you to learn all that you need to equip yourself for almost any job, but the ambition, the wish and the drive must come from within yourself.

So first of all you must have some idea of what you want to be and keep that goal in view while you are kicking the ball that happens to be in front of you or, in other words, learning to do well the job, big or small, on which you are at present working.

6. Rules of the road

If you are going to drive a car safely on the road, there are certain rules which you must obey. Some of these rules are so necessary that they have been made into laws and you must conform to them whether you like it or not. Others are "rules of the road" which you are expected to observe but which are not compulsory. If these rules fulfil their object, travel on the roads will be safe and pleasant for all, but the success of the rules depends on everybody keeping them. This can only come about if you do your bit and keep them yourself.

The same applies to driving your career through Harris Lebus country.

7. Laws

The laws, or rules which everyone must observe are presented as an addendum to this booklet.

8. General rules for everybody

There are many things which it is advisable for you to do though no-one will make you do them. Here are some of them:-

First be fair to others. You will not be working alone, you are one of a team and you must help the team to win a game instead of trying to kick a few goals on your own. What you do affects the people around you. Try to understand what actions of yours will help them or hinder them. Do not wait to be told. Some things are quite evident but others need some thought. For example, noise reduces the efficiency of work, so do not make unnecessary noise, even if you are in a noisy shop or office. Remember also that rough or noisy play and practical jokes are out of place and may be dangerous in a factory.

Next, be fair to the firm. The success and efficiency of our firm – of which you are part – is a matter of importance to you. Be sure that you give an honest day's work which will not only satisfy the supervisor under whom you work, but which will also give you the satisfaction yourself.

If the firm is going to keep on paying all our wages, it is necessary for it to make enough money. Anything which is damaged, or any unnecessary repair, reduces the money which the firm earns. It is therefore very important to take care of all equipment: use it properly, keep it clean and make it last.

All materials should be made to go as far as possible. For example. Glue cannot always be prevented from falling on the floor but glue on the floor has to be paid for: it is just as good glue as the glue in the pot but it does not make any furniture.

In particular, you should be careful with finished furniture. We cannot sell a damaged article and expensive repairs are necessary if furniture is scratched or dented.

Be careful with the buildings. Do not allow paintwork to be knocked or marked. Keep floors clean as this reduces the money which has to be spent on cleaning.

Finally remember that we regard a lot our methods of making furniture as confidential and some of this confidential information will be in your care. Keep it to yourself.

Finally, be fair to yourself. As your own progress and your own happiness in life will depend largely on yourself you cannot afford to drift along. You must decide for yourself the standard which you will try to reach. As there is no person in the world for whom you have greater moral responsibility than for yourself, you should accept no second-rate standard. Nothing but the best should satisfy you. We seldom reach our targets but the higher you aim, the higher you will hit; so aim high and let nothing discourage you.

You will find that self-control and self-discipline are necessary for happiness and that true manliness may show more in avoiding some things than doing them.

You owe it to yourself to be clean and tidy and to appear smart in the way you stand, the way you talk and the way you walk.

Your success in industry will depend largely on how well you can think, even though your main job is working with your hands. Practice thinking therefore, not only about big things but about all the little things you do and wherever you may be. Nothing is so simple that it cannot be done wrong and even the most ordinary and boring job can become interesting when you begin to find a reason for your every movement and action.

9. Don't be discouraged

However hard you try, it is not to be expected that you will be successful in following all the advice which we have given above. If you slip; don't give in. Get back on the right road and push ahead in the right direction. The reward in happiness, satisfaction and success is well worth the effort.

Finally, remember always that someone else may be using you as their model; don't let them down.