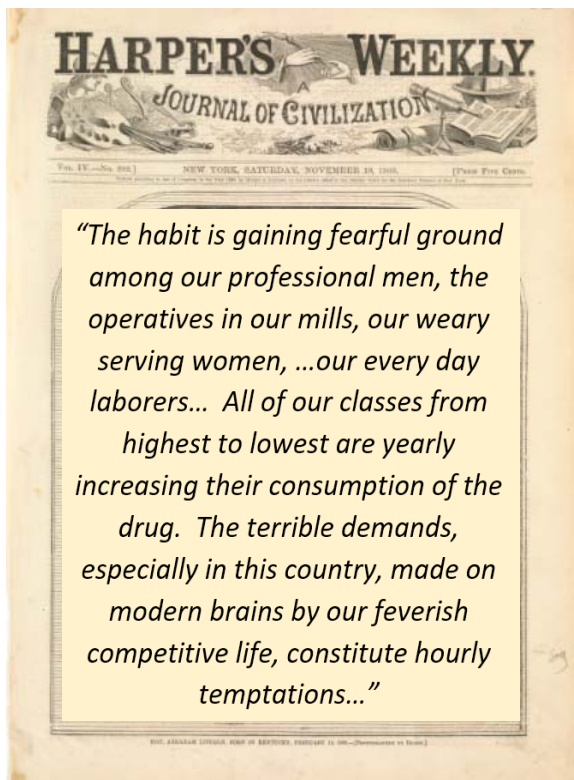


Drug Abuse in Industry

A Survey

1971



Employee Drug Abuse	
Under the Influence	18
Possession	12
Selling	6

Reasons for Establishing Drug Abuse Policies	
Impact on job performance	19
Absenteeism	14
Illegality of drugs	12
Company image	12
Public security	10
Loss due to theft	6
Unknown seriousness	6
Rise in cases among employees	5

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Introduction

In 1971, I returned to graduate school to work on an MBA. With a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration, majors in Personnel Administration and Marketing, my two-year service in the U.S. Army was a study in management and leadership as much as it was my direct service in Georgia and South Korea. The learnings came as quickly as the first few weeks of basic training, then highlights followed through advanced training at the Military Police school, through a six-month assignment at the MP School, and then for a year in South Korea. The management and leadership lessons could fill a book – from both a participant and observer point-of-view.

In South Korea, I came into regular contact with my Military Police colleagues working daily apprehending soldiers, too many for violations involving use and possession of illegal drugs. While my assignment was in a different area, I quickly experienced heightened curiosity in a pattern. A significant percentage of the soldiers apprehended and charges for drug activity were college graduates assigned to what appeared to be very routine, monotonous work. It's important to note that my colleagues, MP's assigned to Criminal Investigation and Security positions, were mostly college graduates. We enjoyed challenging work assignments with a lot of factors that today would be seen as a highly "engaging" setting.

Returning to graduate school, I immediately became interested in the issue of "drug use" in the workplace. I then discovered one of the first studies on the topic, one that looked beyond the issue of just alcoholism, one that included the emerging drug issues of the 70's. The study was done focused only on organizations in New York state. I contacted the authors of the study and received permission to use the basic elements of their survey questionnaire.

The following is the report written based on the survey that was mailed to companies in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota. It has been updated here to include minor corrections, primarily to punctuation, and clearer presentation of the "tables."

It is fascinating to read this 1971 report with eyes that are almost 50 years older. Many things have changed; many have stayed the same. One example is that the #1 challenge for organizations reported in 1971 was "Detecting drug use" and has remained the #1 challenge in every survey since the original. Additional observations from this original research are being noted for inclusion in a report planned for 2017/2018.

Jim Schreier
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DRUG ABUSE IN INDUSTRY

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“The habit is gaining fearful ground among our professional men, the operatives in our mills, our weary serving women, our fagged clerks, our former liquor drunkards, our every day laborers, who a generation ago took gin. All of our classes from highest to lowest are yearly increasing their consumption of the drug. The terrible demands, especially in this country, made on modern brains by our feverish competitive life, constitute hourly temptations to some form of the sweet, deadly sedative.”

(Harper’s Magazine, 1870)

Drug abuse in industry is not new to American business as is evidenced by this quote from 1870. The problem however has changed considerably with the enacting of drug legislation and a more intense industrialization of society. In the past few years increasing drug use by a subculture has affected society as a whole and drug use has crept into many other segments of society, including the working world.

The problem of drug abuse in business affects many areas of a firm's operation. The problem concerns a company's sponsorship of community action groups, its support of educational programs, and more directly, the rise of the incidence of drug abuse within the company's walls. A firm might experience increased absenteeism, a decrease in quality or quantity of production, increased in—company theft, or poor judgement as a result of employee drug abuse. The problem is clouded by the maze of legal, social, economic, moral, physical, and psychological factors involved and further complicated by the hesitancy on the part of many firms to admit the possible existence of the problem. This hesitancy means that the necessary steps are not being taken to curb a disease which has the potential to destroy human lives and is capable of seriously affecting productivity.

Lack of employer action in the areas of drug abuse has created in many firms an unwritten policy, which states that concealment of drug abuse will be rewarded with promotions, raises, and benefits, but that detection will result in termination. Many firms seem to be waiting for someone to develop the solution to drug abuse. Business, however, is still searching for the cure to employee alcoholism (alcohol is a drug) and drug abuse has the potential to become a far more serious problem in both numbers and physical damage. There is no single cure for drug abuse just as there is no single cure for alcoholism, or any other job related behavioral problem. A drug abuse policy, drug rehabilitation program, or an in—company drug information series must be specifically formulated to the structure, needs, and attitudes of the particular company.

A survey of the three states of Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota was conducted to determine the extent of drug abuse in industry. Questionnaires were sent to 150 firms with slightly over 50% replying. In some cases, the data returned could not be used. The types of firms replying, and their size are shown in Tables 1 and 2. Heavy response in the study was received from the Southeastern Wisconsin—Northeastern Illinois area. Because the problem of employee

alcoholism has long been familiar to most organizations, this drug was left out of parts of the survey dealing with drug abuse incidents. This was done intentionally to attempt an evaluation of the growing incidence of “newer” drugs.

Manufacturing	19	Food Processing	3
Communications	7	Paper Products	3
Insurance	6	Retail	3
Banking	4	Hospitals	3
Electronics	4	Petroleum	3
Transportation	4	Education	1
Civil Service	3		

Under 100	2
100 – 499	5
500 – 999	6
1000 – 4999	30
5000 – 9999	7
Over 10000	12

Companies were surveyed with personnel departments of 50 or more people with medical departments staffed by full time doctors and firms were surveyed with no medical department and only a part time personnel function. Information was obtained from a wide variety of business environments.

Incidence of drug abuse within the firm was reported by 36% of the firms responding to the survey while an additional 39% stated that they were aware of drug use among their employees yet could not confirm specific incidents or were convinced the problem did exist, yet they had no suspected incidents to report. The specific types of drug abuse reported, and the drugs involved are shown in Tables 3 and 4.

Under the Influence	18
Possession	12
Selling	6

Marijuana	18
Barbiturates/Amphetamines	15
Heroin	5

None of the firms who had experienced incidence of drug abuse were able to trace any specific in-company theft to drug abuse and only three mentioned it as being possible. All noted that at this time it was very minor. A single firm had an estimate of work loss, six months, due to drug abuse and another attributed an increase in absenteeism to possible drug abuse.

Detection of employee drug abuse is the difficult problem involved here. The figures reported in this survey are significantly lower than data reported in other national and regional surveys. To some degree this could be expected because of the geographical location. But what happens in other areas often happens in this area sooner or later.

Under all circumstances, the incidence of drug abuse has increased from 1969 through 1971. Since the completion of this survey in late 1971, evidence has been received that drug abuse on the job is still rising. This increase can be attributed to two separate factors. First is what seems to be a continuous growth of drug use. While many programs have been introduced to halt this spread there has been no evidence of any reversal of drug usage. Secondly is the major fact

that growing awareness on the part of industry has resulted in some willingness to report confirmed incidents. This awareness has developed because of growing attention given to the specific problem of drugs in industry by national publications, industry surveys, and numerous conferences and seminars.

Classifying drug abusers by sex and the educational composition of the work force is shown in Tables 5 and 6. While many business executives feel that drug abuse can be partially attributed to the vast incidence of drug use in the colleges, none of the incidents reported was proven to be employees who had attended or graduated from college. This relates to growing awareness and the problem that industry looks first to the lower levels of employment and may be unwilling to look into managerial ranks until the problem becomes unavoidable. More recent data has shown more incidence of employee drug use in managerial ranks.

Male	82%
Female	18%

Grade School	2.5%
Trade School	20.0%
High School (Some)	27.5%
High School Graduate	20.0%

No incidence of employee drug abuse was reported by several companies and they cited many reasons why they felt they had been able to avoid the problem. Those reasons most often mentioned were: a small company, low turnover, and older employees. Others mentioned were: small town, screening of employees, professional employees, and location. These firms did however feel that drug abuse would affect their firms in the future. They expressed the thought that this would be attributable to the rising use of drugs among youth in general and among college students. There was little doubt expressed by the companies surveyed that the problem of drug abuse is growing and there are few firms that feel they will be able to avoid the problem.

Determining the best action to take in the incidence of employee drug abuse requires the proper mixing of a company's rules, attitudes, and an understanding of the complex framework of the drug problem. Current practice shows only that many companies are confused and that the result can be action which does not solve the problem or action which may be too harsh for the particular incident.

Asked to state what their action would be when an employee was found in some way involved with drugs, many employers took a definite stand that discharge from employment would follow certain types of involvement (Table 7). A few firms replied that they had no specific guidelines for these situations and three replied that they would not release an employee under any of these general circumstances.

Possession	1	Possession or Selling	6
Selling	21	Selling or Influence	5
Influence	2	Possession, Selling, Influence	18

Looking at more situations of employee drug abuse and possible actions continues to show that different companies have established many different ways of handling the problem. It must be emphasized again that there is no way to show that any one plan of action is suited to all firms. The delicate balance of factors must be understood, and a policy fit to these factors.

Companies were asked to describe their action if an employee was suspected of being under the influence of a "hard drug. A majority of firms stated that their first action would be medical to verify the suspicion and based on that further action could be determined. Several companies would conduct a complete investigation involving medical check, background check, and a determination of the effect the problem has had on the employee's job performance. Some companies responded with a three-stage plan of action involving a consultation with the employee, medical verification, and referral of the employee to rehabilitation and counselling service. The extreme is shown by companies that would immediately fire the employee and notify the police. Other courses of action included: send the employee home, take no action until suspicion is proven, discuss and communicate company policy to the employee, and medical verification, and disciplinary action.

A specific look must be taken at marijuana because of the potential claims that it is less harmful than alcohol and the real possibility that a change may occur in the legal status of the substance. The effect of marijuana legalization, or decriminalization, will not have any major influence on industry's position. The substance will still be controlled; its status at the most will be similar to the current status of alcohol. It will still have the potential to damage job performance when used indiscriminately. However, employer action when given the specific involvement of marijuana varied considerably from the other "drugs" (Tables 8 and 9).

Warning	50%
Release	40%
Judge Each Case	10%

Fire	35%	Fire/Inform Police	36%
Warn	5%	Warn/Inform Police	5%
Inform Police	15%	Judge Individually	3%

A good argument can be made at this point for company involvement in drug education programs. Should a firm be concerned about employee conduct off the job? There are arguments that emphatically say no to this question, and it is defensible that business has no right to dictate employee behavior after hours. But what about the question of employee behavior where that behavior may affect an employee's performance or his availability. A case has been reported where an executive was lost to a firm while serving a sentence for marijuana possession. A company's position in this instance is a personal decision. The company can be encouraged however to consider the possibility of educating its employees and their families in the potential dangers of drug involvement.

The legal responsibility of an employer to take some action in cases involving employee drug abuse is greatly misunderstood by many companies. Almost 70% of the firms surveyed feel that there is a legal responsibility to take action. 62% of the firms also feel there is a moral responsibility while the remaining firms feel the responsibility is moral only. Most of the laws express things which cannot be done but there are very few that express what should be done. The legal framework of American society is somewhat negative. Therefore, this legal responsibility does not exist, and an employer is free to determine what action he wants to take for each individual case.

Certainly, the employer might want to involve the legal authorities in certain cases involving the sale of drugs, or when this is judged to be the only action which will help the employee. The question of moral responsibility is a larger question and is something that each firm must face individually.

The hiring of rehabilitated drug addicts requires the understanding of the employee's problems and usually involves extra efforts and expenditures. However, it has been shown in several studies that rehabilitated addicts, with both drugs and alcohol, can be the most productive workers within a firm. But management is always afraid of that relapse which can and often does occur. 14% of the firms surveyed reported that they have retained a drug addicted employee with most firms replying they would do so if the employee agreed to participate in a rehabilitation or methadone maintenance program. Similar results were reported for rehabilitated alcoholics. Firms reported having rehabilitated addicts on their payrolls for up to five years with only one firm reporting dissatisfaction with the employee's performance. Heroin addicts on methadone maintenance programs are now being employed and in two reported cases the employers were satisfied with job performance.

The importance of a clear-cut company policy has been stressed in all studies directed at employee drug abuse. The policy should cover all aspects of the company action under different circumstances, the attitude of management towards the problem, and the rehabilitation and counselling services offered. A general policy does not and cannot exist because the policy must be specifically tailored to the company. The policy should be written and communicated to all employees.

80% of the firms surveyed have an official policy concerning alcohol which has been communicated to their employees but only 35% have taken an official stand on drug abuse. An additional 30% state they are now considering a policy on drugs. Understandably firms that have experienced a problem with employee drug abuse report a higher percentage of official company policy, more than 75%. Numerous policies have been written since the study was conducted. Some have showed intense concern for the problems involved while others have showed a lack of understanding over what really must be done. A bad policy is probably better than the unwritten policy mentioned earlier but it is no substitute for a clear-cut set of policy guidelines and work rules.

Table 10 shows that the types of policy established varied for the companies who have taken an official stand and Table 11 shows that the objectives of these policies also varied. Table 12 shows that the reasons for management deciding to establish a policy on drugs were even more varied, and many firms cited multiple reasons.

Companies that have education programs on drug abuse use a variety of materials and aids to present the programs. Included in these are seminars, pamphlets, films, newsletters, video tape, and consulting firms. Programs have been in effect from one month to 18 years with most programs being established within the past year.

Written Rules for On-the-Job Use	9
Informal Rules for On-the-Job Use	10
Screening of Candidates	6
Written Rules/Screening	14
Informal Rules/Screening	2

Education	30
Screening	27
Community Services	12
Rehabilitation	8
Reference	4
Job Performance	3
Medical	2
Safety	1

Impact on job performance	19	Injury	2
Absenteeism	14	Concern for employees	2
Illegality of drugs	12	Preventive	1
Company image	12	Good business	1
Public security	10	Liability	1
Loss due to theft	6	Large number of youth	1
Unknown seriousness	6	Current problem	1
Rise in cases among employees	5	Articles	1
		In plant availability	1

The educational programs have been conducted for different levels of management as shown in Table 13.

Management	1	Management and Supervisors	5
Supervisors	4	Supervisors and Employees	1
Employees	1	Management, Supervisors, and Employees	8

Management was asked an open question as to what they felt was the most serious problem in formulating effective policies concerning drug abuse. More than 25 different problems were stated with the following mentioned most often.

- *Detection of drug abuse and proving abuse.*
- *The difficulty of obtaining accurate information about the problem.*
- *Creating an accurate educational program for employees.*
- *Determining the correct policy.*
- *Obtaining good facilities for rehabilitation programs.*
- *Coordinating efforts with the legal aspects of the problem.*
- *Getting management interested in formulating drug abuse programs.*

- *Creating a program which is fair to employees.*
- *Conflicting opinions on the medical effects of drugs.*
- *Getting a good counselor.*
- *Maintaining communications with employees.*
- *Impact of drug problem on employee morale.*
- *Social acceptance of drugs as a way of life.*
- *Convincing management that the problem exists.*

In discussing company policies on drug abuse, management was asked the question if they, or their policy, distinguished between marijuana and "hard drugs." Only 25% of the firms responded that a distinction was made. The question of individual companies and circumstances rises again here but there is a growing tendency of major firms to treat marijuana and alcohol at the same level with more emphasis on medical care, while hard drugs usually force stronger action because of more severe damage to the job situation, the employee, and his family.

In concluding the survey, management was asked to rate drug abuse as a business problem in relation to alcoholism. 50% of the firms felt that the problem is less serious than alcoholism; 23% feel it is more serious while the remaining firms feel the problems are identical or qualify their judgement by stating that alcoholism is certainly more serious in terms of numbers but that drug abuse is more dangerous or potentially dangerous as a physical and mental health problem.

This survey of Midwest firms has shown what is happening now and what firms are trying to do to solve the growing problems of drug abuse in industry. From this management can make decisions helping them modify current policy or formulate new policies.

Since the completion of the study it has become evident that many more firms are getting involved in the drug abuse programs sponsored by industrial organizations, insurance companies, and government agencies. There is a growing trend toward companies preparing written drug policies and establishing drug programs, often in conjunction with labor unions. But unfortunately, the problem of drug abuse in society, and consequently in business, is still continuing to rise. And there are still too many companies that have not reacted to this growing threat.

There is also growing evidence that drug abuse is affecting the higher levels of management as more firms become aware of the executive drug abuser. The problems of drug abuse are no longer confined to the production worker. They never were as is evidenced by many studies done on employee alcoholism.

There is still a need for concerned effort on the part of businessmen to look inside their organization and determine the proper reaction to this problem, and if they are lucky enough to have escaped its effects so far, now is the time to prepare with a policy that recognizes the problems of drug abuse, that recognizes that drug abuse is a disease, and that creates a program that will rehabilitate and not punish the drug abuser. Business and industry have the capability to have a tremendous impact on solving the problem of drug abuse in society because they have the power to use a strong motivating force in helping the individual employee, the fact that the employee wants to keep working.