This chapter is intended primarily for the construction executive who is interested in forming a sales department. When I mention sales department, it can mean one or more salesmen. If you have or are planning to employ one salesman, and his responsibilities will be selling, then you have a sales department.

The idea of a sales department may take some getting used to, just like the topics in Chapter 3. But it's my understanding that some of the larger construction companies in the United States have salesmen and have used them for several years. It's not a new idea, and it is being used within the construction industry successfully.

I have no doubt whatsoever that more and more general contractors will be using professional salesmen in the future. As time passes, we will experience a great many changes throughout the industry, and construction selling will be a part of these changes. I hope my thoughts and the experiences that I relate in this chapter will help you form and operate a successful sales department.

The first thing I should explain is the type of person you'll employ as a salesman. Again, it's probably going to take some getting used to.

You'll have someone working for you who to all appearances will look like he's not. He'll wander in and out of the office on no set schedule. Most of the time you'll have a vague idea about where he is and what he's doing. Some of the time you won't have the foggiest notion of where he
is. You may go for a couple of days without seeing him. You call his home in the middle of the morning to leave a message, and he answers the phone. All this can be difficult to accept if you are used to people punching a clock. But stop and think for a moment. Where is the one place your salesman is not going to sell a building? Your office!

The office is something he will use to help him. It becomes only a back-up operation to his main working area, which is everywhere except the office.

I'll never forget what one of the owners of the firm where I first worked said to me when I started. He told me the one place he'd better not see too much of me was in the office. Neither he nor anyone else in the office had any intention of buying a building from me. So go some place where people might buy.

The truly professional salesman is very independent and wants very little to no supervision. This is even applicable to firms that use a formal sales force, such as the building material manufacturers. Oh sure, they have sales managers, and all the chains of command it takes; but their sales manager knows when he has a professional working for him. He doesn't have to read the paperwork to tell him what the man has been doing; he only needs to glance at the order sheet because that's the only yardstick one can use to measure a professional salesman. Does he get results? That's the bottom line; everything else is just so much window dressing.

A good one-word description of the construction salesman is "maverick." He's a person who is his own man, a self-starter who's good at what he does and knows it. Our construction salesman is the kind whom you tell what you expect to accomplish but not how to do it; that's up to him. These are the conditions he will work best under.

Okay, you say, I get the picture of what I can expect in this individual; but how do I fold him into a construction company operation, and, just as important, where do I find such a person? The rest of this chapter will help with these questions.

**INTEGRATING THE SALES DEPARTMENT INTO THE OVERALL OPERATION**

Your first step will be the physical part of integrating a sales department into your company. The salesman needs a place where he can take care