

In Practice

Coaching Tips From the Ballpark

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There are many ways to train on team-coaching skills. We recently experimented with an unusual one: We engaged the consultant services of two minor-league baseball coaches—John O'Donoghue (a former pitcher for the Athletics, Indians, Orioles, and Expos) and Al Bumbry (an Oriole outfielder for 12 years). They are the pitching coach and the outfield coach for the Bowie Bay Sox, a AA minor league club of the Baltimore Orioles.

Why professional baseball coaches? Because their full-time job is coaching. In a baseball organization, other people handle the strategic planning, report writing, budgeting, and other activities required of many managers and supervisors. The coach's daily responsibility is to work with players to improve their skills (such as fielding, hitting, and throwing) and their attitudes (such as being a team player and respecting the organization's culture).

Coaches O'Donoghue and Bumbry are successful only to the extent that their players develop. The mission of minor-league teams is to provide players to their parent clubs.

Some participants in our session on team coaching were puzzled by our choice of consultants. Others were skeptical—they expected to see



Peter Bono

tobacco-chewing, temper-tantrum-throwing, loud-mouthed men in child's garb screaming at their young players about strikeouts, muffed grounders, and throws to the wrong base.

We met the coaches at the Harry Grove Stadium in Frederick, Maryland. First, we watched 30 minutes of infield practice from the box seats along the first baseline. Then O'Donoghue and Bumbry came over to talk with us.

Their major coaching points:

Selecting coaches. The prime prerequisite for a coach is self-control. You cannot teach others without being in full control of yourself. Babe Ruth, one of baseball's immortals, lacked sufficient self-control ever to manage the Yankees or any other club. "Baseball, too, tries to avoid the Peter Principle," O'Donoghue said.

(The Peter Principle is the idea that an employee rises through the ranks of an organization until reaching a position in which he or she is incompetent.)

"You do have to have played," O'Donoghue pointed out. In fact, in

To learn about team-coaching skills, two enterprising trainers asked...coaches.

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Baltimore's system, he said, major-league playing experience is an important qualification for being a coach. The biggest reason is credibility among the players.

In addition, O'Donoghue believes that the best coaches are those who had to struggle as major-league players. Such players have to work harder and make more sacrifices than the superstars who get by on talent alone. According to O'Donoghue, the players who have to struggle learn more about themselves and the game's intricacies.

Developing players. Development occurs best in an atmosphere of praise and encouragement. O'Donoghue and Bumbry both said they use positive feedback liberally and publicly during practices and games.

The coaches also note players' errors in some detail. Then they invite the players who made those errors to an early pregame practice, to work on particular skills.

Not all players come. That's OK, O'Donoghue said. He doesn't take names. But the players who miss the special practice find that failure is a strong motivation. If a player doesn't work to correct problems, it soon becomes apparent to all—player, teammates, and scouts—that the player must improve, or give up dreams of the majors. Usually, O'Donoghue noted, the player will approach the coach for help.

Baseball organizations have corporate cultures. In Baltimore's system, players are always in full uniform on the field. They wear hats, front-forward. Uniform pant legs are a certain length. Players come to practice on time. And they stay in shape.

Maintaining such standards is a part of the coach's job. "It provides the discipline needed for the game and life in general," Bumbry said.

Coaches disagree among themselves frequently, but never in front of players. "We have our knock-down, drag-out discussions during coaches' meetings, but we maintain a solid front with the players," O'Donoghue said. A united front, he said, is particularly important with the "wedgies." Wedgies are players who go from coach to coach seeking the answers they want.

Mentors are crucial. So are sup-

port systems. Bumbry spoke of the importance of someone to talk with during a losing streak, or when a player is sent "back down" to the minor leagues.

Training implications. Participants in our session on team coaching came away both informed about coaching and surprised about the similarities between O'Donoghue's and Bumbry's challenges and their own. They also enjoyed the ballpark as a classroom. Many stayed for the game.

A change of turf. Many people face challenges similar to the ones we all face in our training curriculums. Learning from others, on their own turf, peaks participants' interest and motivation. A change of instructor and locale can be instructive. Our module on team coaching would not have been as vivid and memorable if the coaches had come to our classroom.

For future programs, we're planning a visit to a woman's athletic team to see whether any gender-related qualities affect team coaching, as well as a trip to a jazz session to learn about self-managed teams.

Breaking the Conspiracy of Silence

From a speech by Felice Schwartz at the 1994 Women's Center Leadership Conference, in McLean, Virginia. Schwartz—now a researcher, writer, and speaker—was the founder and president of Catalyst, a national nonprofit organization to support women in business.

"We should put aside the deliberation about whether women are really different from men because we're programmed differently in our DNA, or whether we're different only because of the different socialization and conditioning. We're really not going to know that until everybody is free to do what he or she wants to or deserves to do. In the meantime...women are different in their experience of life today than men are, for four central reasons.

"1. We are charged by society with the primary care for children at this time. And that has a tremendous



Felice Schwartz: "There's nothing that works for women that doesn't work for companies."

impact on our lives in every way.

"2. We have a very different experience in the workplace from men. There are barriers there for women that really don't exist for men: the virtual absence of flexibility that would enable women to be productive...the lack of mentors and role models, the exclusion from the 'old-boy network,' and of course, sexual harassment.

"3. Our experience in society, where we are outside the power structure that men have created, [is different]. Men have written the rules and written the language....

"4. And then finally, not only the absence of a reward, but even recognition of the qualities that...women bring....

"We're dead in the water if we continue playing by the rules of men; if we continue not to recognize that we are the most valuable underutilized resource in the country, one that no other country can match; [and] if we don't join hands and break the conspiracy of silence that exists—the conspiracy of silence about issues affecting women, about the corrosiveness of the environment in corporations and professional areas for women, about the extraordinary attrition of women that is a result of these barriers....

"We can't afford to fail to harness every bit of talent we have in this country, including that of women.... The whole way in which women have been socialized makes us today much more able to be effective leaders: [Women have] the ability to

achieve rapport, to build consensus, to recognize talent and develop it, [and] to come together with people in this global economy.

"Corporate America is hemorrhaging now. Did you know that there are more people employed by women-owned businesses than by the *Fortune* 500 industrial companies? I think that's an amazing statistic. And it's not because women are not committed to their careers. It's because they're up against a corrosive environment, and they're being forced out. And that's not only a loss to women, but it's a loss to the American economy.

"It costs 150 percent of a year's salary to replace an experienced manager. Now, that's shocking, when the attrition of women following maternity is 25 percent.... What would happen if 25 percent of men didn't return from vacation? The place would be in an uproar. Why shouldn't it be in an uproar about women not returning from maternity leave? We're not allowed to talk about it.

"And now we have to think, not about how to make women like men, but how to take up the slack. And the slack is that whole tremendous job that women were doing at home. So we have to give women the flexibility that they need and we have to—it sounds radical, but it makes business sense—to encourage and facilitate the role that men want increasingly to take in the lives of their children."

(For information about the 1995 women's leadership conference, call the Women's Center at 703/273-2288.)

The Walls Keep Tumblin' Down

By Rebecca Thomas, a free-lance writer and the former manager of chapter services at the American Society for Training and Development, Alexandria, Virginia.

If you haven't begun to work on your foreign-language skills to increase your marketability in the global economy, you may want to consider studying Slovak.

The United States recently signed an agreement with the Slovak Republic to enhance the social and economic relationship between the two countries. The U.S.-based Association for International Practical Training and the Slovak Academic Information Agency will work together to promote exchange opportunities for individuals and groups, with an emphasis on paid, on-the-job work exchanges between the United States and the Slovak Republic. The goal of the exchanges is to provide greater educational opportunities for both nations.

At the ceremony honoring the countries' mutual vision and cooperation, Theodore Russell, the U.S. Ambassador to the Slovak Republic, remarked that the agreement provides a significant new model for strengthening the private, voluntary sector in countries throughout central and eastern Europe. Such models are critical to the success of the Slovak Republic as it transforms structures throughout its society.

For more information, contact Michelle Stoddard, AIPT, 10400 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 250, Columbia, MD, USA; 21044-3150; 410/997-2200.

The Rising Tide of Global Training

So far, most companies have only gotten their feet wet, when it comes to training for their international business efforts. But almost all respondents in a recent survey of HRD executives predict that their organizations will become more deeply immersed in international business—and most expect related training activities to grow, as well.

The survey results were based on 79 responses from *Fortune* 500 companies and private companies with \$500 million or more in sales. The American Society for Training and Development conducted the study as part of its National HRD Executive Survey.

Contrary to the perception that international business is a new area, many of the respondents' organizations (49 percent) have been doing business abroad for more than 20 years. Twenty

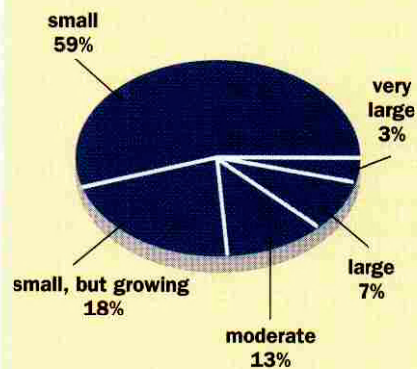
percent each say they've been doing business abroad for 11 to 20 years and for six to 10 years. Eight percent have been going international for one to five years, and only 3 percent of respondents say their companies have been international for less than a year.

Despite the long-term nature of their international operations, most organizations have barely scratched the surface when it comes to training for those areas. Most (59 percent) of respondents characterize their firms' international training efforts as a "small" percentage of their total training activity. Another 18 percent say that international training is a "small, but growing" area in their organizations.

All of the responding companies offer some training to some of their international employees. But often, that training is restricted to a small number of people.

Not surprisingly, most of the international training goes to employees

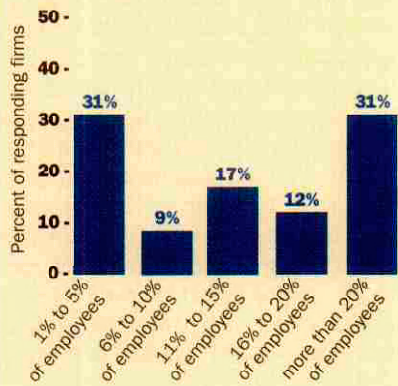
How Large Are Your International Training Efforts?



in the executive and middle-management ranks. Each of those two groups receives 23 percent of the international training done in the responding companies. Professional-level employees receive 18 percent of the training, and top management gets only 15 percent. Supervisors get 12 percent of the international training given in their organizations, and support staff receive only 9 percent.

Almost a third of the companies also provide training for the families of employees who are posted abroad. Of those firms, 37 percent train family members in language

What Percent of International Employees Receive Training



skills, 30 percent train them in the customs and cultures of their host countries, and another 30 percent provide them with general orientation training.

The international training function is much more likely to be decentralized than centralized in the responding firms. Almost three-quarters of the companies have decentralized international training, with authority usually divided by country or division.

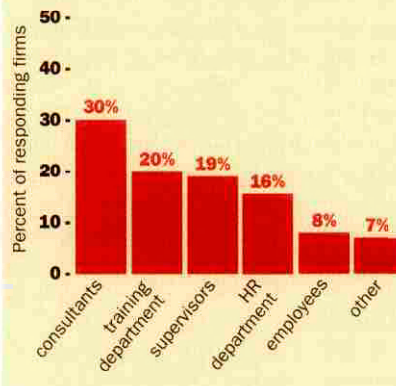
Training for international employees does seem to be on the upswing; 64 percent of the respondents call it an area of "increasing importance" for their firms. The growing importance of international training may be linked to its high success rate. Ninety-three percent of respondents characterize their firms' training as somewhat or very successful in enhancing their efforts at doing business abroad.

Balancing Act

By Rebecca Thomas, a free-lance writer and the former manager of chapter services at the American Society for Training and Development, Alexandria, Virginia.

Proponents of total-quality management have long known that success depends on integrated organizational strategies designed to meet the customer's needs. People Performance Management Forum is a new association founded specifically to address the major changes taking place in the way organizations manage

Who Does the International Training in Your Firm?



employees, customers, and suppliers.

"Today's need to maximize customer satisfaction, productivity, and quality requires an unprecedented emphasis on getting the best out of all the people involved in the business" says Bruce Bolger, spokesperson for the association. "To successfully manage in this environment requires the integration of human resources and sophisticated marketing techniques."

Traditionally, organizations have viewed employees, customers, and suppliers as unique entities, each requiring different forms of management and communication. That's not necessary, according to PPMF.

Managing those areas as separate entities "has led to the proliferation of specific disciplines in human resources and marketing that often have very little to do with each other," explains Bolger. Such disjointed management makes employees unfamiliar with the marketing promises made to customers, fosters little coordination between human resources and marketing, and creates unnecessary competition among internal departments.

The goal of PPMF is to establish a disciplined approach to people performance management, using a curriculum that stresses the integration of distinct disciplines such as training, performance measurement, internal communications, promotion marketing, direct marketing, database marketing, and strategic planning. The group will also sponsor research and education forums.

Wanted: Ergonomics Success Stories

Do you have an ergonomics success story? *Ergonomics in Design: The Magazine of Human Factors Applications* is seeking submissions of articles describing the application of ergonomics and human-factors principles.

Ergonomics in Design, the magazine of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society, focuses on ways in which readers can benefit from the application of ergonomics principles, and on contributions that human-factors professionals can make to the design of systems, tools, environments, or products.

Articles should be no more than 3,000 words long; send four copies, double-spaced. For a sample issue and detailed manuscript guidelines, write to the editor, Daryle Jean Gardner-Bonneau, at the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society, Box 1369, Santa Monica, CA 90406-1369 USA; fax 310/394-1811.

Listen Up!

Talk is cheap, but listening pays off in a big way, says Diana Di Resta, president of New York-based Di Resta Communications. She calls listening a high form of respect, and the most important but underutilized business skill.

Di Resta lists four steps to listening effectiveness:

- ▶ **attending** (having a positive attitude, eliminating distractions, and controlling emotions)
- ▶ **understanding** (understanding the vocabulary; listening actively; and picking up on ideas, key points, and details)
- ▶ **evaluating** (distinguishing between facts, inferences, and judgments)
- ▶ **remembering** (repeating information, recognizing patterns, regrouping material, using mnemonics, and taking notes).

This month's "In Practice" was compiled by Catherine M. Petrini. Send items of interest to "In Practice," 1640 King Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313-2043.