

Discernment - Forced Or Voluntary?

Identification of the most important criterion of an effective Training Director would be a most difficult task and the criteria would perhaps be as varied as the number of individuals engaged in the identifying process. Leadership ability would probably be judged most important by many; technical knowledge would rank highest by others; creativity would receive much consideration.

These criteria, and others, are commonly accepted by Training Directors and by those responsible for evaluating the Training Director's performance. For the past few years, much emphasis has been placed on the ability to develop and apply new ideas and methods as a key criterion of an effective Training Director. The importance of this ability is reflected in the degree of emphasis placed on it by ASTD. Chapter meetings, national conferences and the *ASTD Journal* all devote much of their attention to this phase of the Training Director's functions. Our national and chapter Research and Development Committees give practically their total attention to this area. Articles concerning new programs, techniques and methods are assured of receiving consideration by editors of the numerous periodicals which cover the personnel, training and managerial fields. In summary, the new, and frequently the revolutionary, approach to training is the vogue.

Now, I would be misunderstood and disappointed if these comments were interpreted as an attempt to minimize the need for the Training Director making continuous efforts to develop and apply new and progressive methods and techniques. In my opinion, however, now is the time (and we may be late) for Training Directors to exercise great discernment in proposing and applying these so-called new approaches. Let us be sure that fundamentals are not sacrificed for temporary interest in, and acceptance of, our programs. Let us have the courage to seriously question the numerous new proposals in regard to this practicability and long range value. Let us beware of the vaudeville approach represented by the utilization of attention getting gimmicks. Surely, we have more to offer than entertainment. Certainly, we recognize the perils of "spoon feeding." Hopefully, we will exercise discernment instead of "drifting with the tide" until those responsible for evaluating our services are required to exercise it for us.

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