

The American Society for Training and Development
1640 King Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313-2043

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Training & Development, vol. 48, no. 3

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Voice Mail

Training Gem

T*ED* has provided HRD specialists with many fine articles, and Cheryl Getty's "Planning Successfully for Succession Planning" (November 1993) is one of the best. That little gem should be read by everyone in the training business.

Getty gives us a look at the urgent need for programs on succession planning and presents a picture of the many problems that have prevented the success of succession-planning efforts.

How true that corporate succession plans often "wind up gathering dust." As a human resource development practitioner, I've seen many succession plans ordered by top managers and assembled by my colleagues, only to be put on a shelf, never referred to, and never used as the basis for anyone's development plan.

Succession plans—combined with individual development plans—can do much to ensure that organizations get the maximum contribution from all employees, especially the highly talented ones who eventually move up in management.

I'd like to see *T&D* conduct a survey of HRD practitioners to find out about their organizations' succession plans, evaluated on the basis of Getty's four keys to success: participation, openness, feedback, and action.

To be successful, the plans have to be visible, managers and supervisors must give input, and all employees must know what the plan is and that it is used.

Alliteratively speaking, Getty's succinct scenario for successful succession planning is right on target.

—**John F. Connors**
Cockeysville, Maryland

A Different View of Diversity

Itake exception to the "Voice Mail" contribution (October 1993) by Ellen Abell on diversity training. She suggests that after people look at their differences, they should examine the "ways in which we're all the same." Abell also suggests that the purpose of diversity training is to educate people about differences and to help them strategize ways to validate and appreciate everyone.

My perception of diversity training is somewhat different. In the business community, diversity training is economically motivated. It isn't about validating and appreciating people; people don't need to be validated or appreciated. Shareholders have a right to expect that the purpose of a company's training isn't to promote societal improvement, but to develop employees to increase productivity, make better decisions, and promote workplace safety. The end result should be enhancing the bottom line and creating profits for shareholders and employees.

Diversity programs should begin with awareness training, in which trainers get at people's beliefs and values. It is a time for recognizing that people's differences aren't necessarily bad and that their similarities aren't necessarily good. Awareness training enables workers and managers to recognize that divergent points of view and events that occur in the workplace may stem from differences in people's perceptions.

In our management-level diversity training, we focus on making managers aware that cultural differences can affect workplace safety, productivity, and financial results. The training helps managers cope with and use people's cultural differences constructively. We still value differences.

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Voice Mail

Doer's Profile

Welcome to the third edition of the Doer's Profile. We created the new feature to give you a way to expand your networking capabilities and to let you know about the interesting and exciting things your colleagues are doing in the field.

Please meet this month's Doer...

Antonio "Tony" Narvaez, a trainer with the Hawaii Laborers Fund, Waianae, Hawaii.

Tony conducts environmental training in such areas as lead abatement, asbestos removal, and hazardous-waste handling. The Hawaii Laborers Fund is part of the Washington, D.C.-based Laborers' International Union of North America.



Tony Narvaez

Hawaii Laborers Fund

Most exciting new development: "Hawaii is just waking up to its toxic-waste problems. We are a paradise; we have to take care of the environment. There are five military bases here. When one closes, it has to be cleaned up before the land is turned over for development. Our workers have to remove asbestos and other toxic materials. Sometimes, we find substances that would upset the public if they knew. I think environmental training is going to be big here."

Biggest problem: "We have hard workers who have strong backs and strong muscles. But many can't read. They need basic-skills training. In this kind of work, people have to be able to read federal regulations, safety rules, and so forth."

Biggest accomplishment: "One reason the workers organized into the union was to get training. Before that, many of their companies were working dangerously. Now, proper training is improving safety."

Last book read: *American Star* by Jackie Collins. "My wife talked me into reading it."

Best training tip: "I just want everyone to come to the courses with clear minds. This is a dangerous field; it is nothing to mess around with. For example, every time we work, we have to wear 'space suits.'"

Favorite pastimes: "I live right on the beach. You can find me free-diving and out there on a surfboard—whenever the water is clean."

Quotable quote: "I enjoy my job. And I get to work with people from all walks of life."

The next step in our diversity training is to leverage differences, not erase them. That requires implementing new approaches and skills learned from people with diverse backgrounds. Organizations can use such approaches and skills to enhance their profits and their

employees' effectiveness.

Ignoring cultural differences—what I call, "cultural determinants"—is to give organizations and people less than the best.

—David C. Wigglesworth

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Voice Mail

Latinos Love Training

I strongly object to several points made in the article, "Training South of the Border," ("In Practice," September 1993).

Since 1987, I've been working with the Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance in developing a training program with more than 140 courses in Latin America. We've worked with more than 3,500 participants from every Spanish-speaking country in Central America and South America. The program is based on the concept of objective, performance-based, interactive instruction. Our reference materials are Mager's works and ASTD's *Info-Lines* in Spanish.

Contrary to the statements in the "In Practice" article, our experience shows that Latin Americans are very interactive in training sessions, to the point of testing the facilitative skills of the Latin American trainers. Latin American trainees are eager to learn from each other, the materials, and the instructors.

As the article said, Latinos have a different perspective on time. But in training, they arrive promptly and ready to learn. In fact, they're often reluctant to leave when a session ends. As for Latinos' supposed lack of participation, the biggest challenge instructors face is *controlling* the participation. And we never have problems getting feedback. We plan for, encourage, and provide opportunities for it. We emphasize "no surprises" and respond positively to input from all participants.

A good training rule in general is to learn the language and culture of the country in which the training occurs. I suspect that people who have problems training in Latin America or other places have difficulties because they haven't followed the principles defined by Mager and others about designing and conducting training. Ask: Is the training instruction or just information?

Last, read the *Info-Lines* on training design and development and the *Info-Line* on "Traveling Trainers: Success in International Settings."

—**Jerry L. Williams**

Jerry L. Williams & Associates
Tucson, Arizona

Editor's note: To order Info-Line, call ASTD Customer Service at 703/683-8100.

SMEs as Trainers

In Ray Faidley's article, "Build a Lean, Clean Training Machine" (October 1993), he overlooks a vast, fertile source of potential trainers by omitting the use of in-house subject matter experts.

In the eyes of trainees, SMEs have instant credibility. They understand the course content and the organization's culture, work tools, and processes. But before SMEs can be expected to be effective trainers, they should receive specialized training on instructional design and trainee motivation.

During more than 12 years as a training and development consultant for a major corporation, I saw many benefits derived from using SMEs as trainers. The company saved thousands of dollars that might have been wasted on ineffective training. The SMEs gained enhanced status, new skills, and recognition from their colleagues. And the company retained a resource of in-house SMEs to call on to provide training as needed.

—**Peter L. Katz**
Knowledge Plus
Carmel, New York

Update

The Residence Inn program of free flowers for every car rental, mentioned in "Working Life" (October 1993), is no longer available.

"Voice Mail" is compiled and edited by **Haidee Allerton**. "Voice Mail" welcomes your views. Send your letters and comments to "Voice Mail," Training & Development, 1640 King Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313-2043; fax them to Allerton at 703/683-9203; or call them in on the "Voice Mail" line, 703/683-9590.