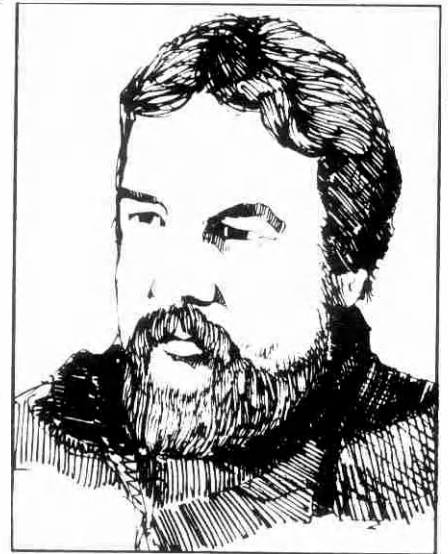


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BY MICHAEL H. COOK, Editor



"A PROFESSION OF CHANGES"

For the past two years, we have published an annual "Back to Basics" issue of the *Journal* featuring a collection of the most popular T&D articles from the *Journal's* 34-year past. Due to overwhelming interest and an ever-increasing number of neophytes entering the HRD profession, we are offering our third annual "Back to Basics" issue!

With this issue spawning new thoughts about the problems/issues facing today's entry-level practitioner as well as those persons contemplating a career change into our field, I asked a few members of the *Journal* Editorial Board to expound on the significant factors they see facing HRD practitioners today. . . . The following are a few of those reflections:

George Bouton (ACCO Industries, Inc.) — "HR people today are not thinking in terms of professional degrees as being the criteria to success. . . . In selecting new people for their training functions, they are looking for those people who know what's going on 'down the line' — placing emphasis on training line managers, etc. to do the training. There are relatively few entry-level HRD positions available today, which is one reason for the current emphasis on training line managers."

Roy Walters (Roy Walters & Associates) — "In the past five to eight years, there has been a significant shift from the responsibility for training *per se* from the training specialist to the line manager. To the person contemplating

entering our field, I would suggest getting a job in a supervisory or managerial capacity and 'getting out into the trenches' to see what the operational issues are from a manager's viewpoint. . . . then make the transition into the HRD area. You will be much more valuable to the HRD department because you understand the issues, problems and language of the line people."

Bouton — "Companies need to make available to these line managers or internal non-trainers the opportunity to develop themselves *intellectually* and to develop skills in the HRD field. This can be done in various ways, such as sending them to school at night, giving them a 'sabbatical' from work for educational purposes, or paying their dues to such organizations as ASTD. Companies have to augment work experience because people need the techniques required to transmit or communicate that experience to others."

"One of the significant changes I have noticed in this profession is the evolution of the field from a *training* business to that of a *people developing* business. The concentration used to be on *how* to train and how to train the trainer. Today, the function faces the overall question of what are we really trying to do in this organization?"

Walters — "I see a shift away from the trainer being the sole authority or classic classroom 'guru' to a role that includes being the designer, analyzer, diagnosti-

cian and planner, focusing on how to structure the organization to get people in the line organization to do effective training."

"I don't think we can any longer focus on the need for managers who can manage *a* function. We are starting to need managers who are capable of managing *systems*."

Arlene Faris (Wagner Electric Co.) — "Another area receiving a great deal of attention, representing a shift in focus, involves the entire issue of *demographics*. We have heard about them for 10 years. We have to get ourselves, as training professionals, ready to deal with such issues as: an aging workforce, another 'baby boom,' more women entering the workforce, etc."

"Our companies don't even seem to understand that there is a problem. We are going to find ourselves, five years from now, suddenly having to scramble, with top management turning to us and saying, 'You knew these things were going on out there, why didn't you get us prepared for them?'"

It's easy to see that, whether neophyte or veteran, training people are and will continue to be required to garner a whole new set of attitudes, understandings and skills. And, as Warren Bennis pointed out in our April 1981 issue, "We are at a real crossroads — a critical period. We must begin planning and training in an effort to keep us from backing into the future!"