IDEAS THAT WORK

Each "Ideas That Work" will feature one or more fresh ideas that have been successfully applied to the human resource development environment, and, in most cases, have saved organizations money and valuable time through increased productivity.

If you would like to share a working "idea" with other members of the profession, please submit it to: Training and Development Journal, P.O. Box 5307, Madison, WI 53705.

30 IDEAS FOR EFFECTIVE TRAINING

International Correspondence Schools (ICS) Employee Management Development Division produced a showcase session at the 1977 ASTD National Conference in Atlanta. The session, "30 Ideas in 30 Minutes," presented a panel of six training directors from business, industry and government. Each trainer described five training techniques that he considered particularly effective. The following is a capsulization of that session:

1. *It's in the (bean) bag:* In teaching a session on motivation, you have to talk about Maslow's hierarchy of needs, from the most basic to the most sophisticated. To make the theory come alive to the participants I toss a bean-bag out to them. I don't say anything about it for five minutes, but wait to see what happens to the bag. The participant holds it. Why? Security. Or he tosses it back to me. We talk about it. You can work it into the hierarchy of needs. It's an effective method.

2. *The CB Radio Fantasy:* This exercise is a good way to end a training program. You tell the participants to relax, to close their eyes, to have a fantasy. You tell them to pretend that their mind is a CB radio with ten channels, and those ten channels symbolize the ten training sessions they have just completed. Now you tell them to roam around on those channels until they hear a session that really has a special meaning, and then focus on that session. What do you hear? What did you like in that training session? What ideas would you like to apply back in your job? What are some of the major obstacles that are going to prevent you from transferring what you have learned back to the job?

You tell the participants to conduct an internal dialogue with themselves for 60 seconds. Then we go into a group discussion of some of the ideas, some of the obstacles.

Now, there's one limitation on this technique. Sometimes your participants might fall asleep on you. So watch out.

3. *Tape and Talkback:* We have a transactional analysis program. Part of this program involves listening to irate customers, sometimes on the phone, sometimes in person. We use an audiotape confrontation exercise. We play a tape of a customer complaining, and then stop, and ask our person how he/she would respond. We record the response, and we analyze it in class in terms of the PAC — parent, adult, child — model. It's a fun exercise to warm up the class for a serious discussion of transactional analysis.

4. *The Great Cartoon Caper:* This is another warmup exercise for transactional analysis. I use cartoons. Some of them don't have captions. I ask the participants to write the captions — any response, anything they want. Then we analyze them in terms of parent, adult, child. Again, it's a good exercise to get the group going; a real ice-breaker.

5. *Speak-easy:* We use our foremen and first-line supervisors as trainers. But a lot of them don't have experience as trainers. They are not accustomed to speaking in front of groups. How do you develop them? We have a course called "conference leadership." Part of this program requires each foreman to get up and give two presentations, one on an assigned topic and one on a topic of his own choosing. Now, a lot of them are apprehensive about it. They are uneasy, nervous. So early in the program, to reduce their anxiety, I have each one make a one-minute presentation, just one-minute, on some nonsensical topic. As the foreman is walking up to the front of the group, I say, I want you to give a one-minute presentation on why you think your job is more important than Jimmy Carter's. It's effective, it reduces their anxieties. By the time they get to the longer presentations, they're relaxed. It's beautiful.

6. *Tape the Experts:* We would like some of our people to have access to courses at the State University, but it is too far and too time-consuming for them to go there. So, we bring the University to our place. We videotape the lectures as they are given at the University, then bring back the tapes and give our people the full curriculum.

7. *Habla Usted Espanol?* We want to train people of foreign descent. They have difficulty reading, writing, even speaking English. So we translate our training programs into their languages.

8. *Vendors Can Teach:* There's always the problem of training people to operate or repair new equipment. We ask the vendor to stay a day or two longer and train all our operators and maintenance people. The additional benefit of this is that, while the equipment is being installed, it's easy to look inside it and pinpoint what might go wrong and explain what to do in case of emergencies.

9. *Employees Can Teach, Too:* You need an expert to teach employees how to use specialized equipment. It's almost impossible to send your people to a seminar at some distant location. Our solution is to train the experts and have them train the others. It's a train-the-trainer technique.

10. *Play the Role:* In a performance appraisal discussion or a counseling interview situation, many of our supervisors and managers feel ill-at-ease. To overcome that, we use a role-playing, and videotape it, so that supervisors and managers can see themselves and how they react. They can critique themselves.

11. *First Things First:* Our basic concept is to do what we have to do and get official support for it.

That's one of the first things we look for. Everyone's in favor of training, but make sure the need exists and the funds are available before you start. It's easier to get the funds and official support when a good needs analysis is made.

12. *Keep it Simple:* There are plenty of theories and concepts and long words in the training business, but the trainer's job is to put them into a form and into language that the trainee can understand. Theories don't mean anything if the trainee doesn't know what you are talking about. Dwell on application of the theories of motivation or learning instead of the theories themselves.

13. *People Power:* Train your people wisely and turn them on. Train the people you need to do a job and train them in what they need to know. People are the most valuable resource, but you have to treat them with some care. Irrelevant subject material turns them off.

14. *Fill the Need:* Be prepared to fill your needs as they develop. Anticipate what might come up.

We use our supervisors as trainers because they are in a position to respond to needs as they develop. They can get right to the point, with the right people, and they keep it simple. Give your supervisors training outlines and they will star for you.

15. *Feedback:* We use a simple evaluation form for craft employees and we also evaluate our supervisors. From these reviews, we can determine where our training needs are. Get information from the grass roots to help where and when needed.

16. *Pre-Train 'em:* My training programs serve a wide variety of personnel from different backgrounds. Some are college-educated. Some have many years of experience. Some have no formal education and are completely inexperienced. To assure that all trainees can perform at a minimum standard class entry level, I give them pre-training. This consists of on-the-job training at their own work sites, with ICS courses and audio-visual programs that I send to them to study on a self-paced

basis. Then, when they come into the training program, I know that they are at a certain starting point.

17. *Show and Tell:* When they walk into the training room, our trainees immediately see marketing propaganda on the walls. They see disassembled pieces of equipment displayed on the walls, with all parts labeled. I have an operational system set up. They have test equipment that they can use throughout the course right there in front of them. So they are immediately and constantly becoming familiar with the equipment they will actually be working with in the field.

18. *Break it Up:* Some subjects are pretty dull to teach. I use short audio-visual programs to enhance the lectures and try to keep people awake. I use overhead slides for flow charts, drawings, schematics and diagrams. We also conduct plant tours. We try this way to break up the dull lecture periods.

19. *Have a Laugh:* Have you heard the one about the graduate student who was doing a study and he had a cockroach and he set it on a table and told it to jump. And it jumped to the end of the table. He picked it up and pulled off a couple of legs and set it back down and told it to jump. It jumped about halfway down the table. He picked it up and pulled off a couple more legs and set it down and told it to jump and it just jumped a little ways. Then he picked it up and pulled off the last two legs and set it down and told it to jump and it didn't move. So he concluded that a cockroach with no legs is deaf. The point is that a bad joke break loosens up the trainees so they are not afraid to ask dumb questions. Because what can be dumber than a joke like that?

20. *Your Readers' Digest:* Rather than overload trainees with bulky documents and materials, I take them all and condense them into a handy format that contains just what they basically need to know and use in their actual field work. The result is uniformity of the size of training materials and related information is on a single sheet when possible.

21. *Roles for All:* Normally in role-playing, we involve two people up front and the rest of the

people sit and watch. That's not too effective. The ones who actually are role-playing are uncomfortable because they feel as if they are on stage, and the others are not doing much of anything. To overcome that we have developed multi-group role-playing. For example, we'll divide a group of 20 trainees into five groups of four each. In each group of four, two play roles as managers and two are observers. So all 20 are involved simultaneously. To improve the feedback mechanism, we give the observers a series of questions to discuss after the role-playing is finished. This works well because it concentrates on the feelings generated. After the role-playing and discussion, we move the trainees around from one group of four to another, so that the observers in one group have a chance to role-play in another.

22. *Film Break:* The traditional way to use a film is to introduce it, show it, then discuss it. We get more mileage and more direct involvement from the trainees by stopping the film at advantageous points during the showing to discuss those points right then and there and relate them to the training program.

23. *Study Thyself:* One of the purposes of management training is to try to get managers to think about themselves and change their own ways of doing things. Before we start, we use self-analysis to help them consider how they are communicating, what kind of leadership style they use, and what kind of motivational activities they pursue. We use a little survey. We ask them 10 questions on what kind of assumptions they make about people, or we may buy a leadership survey and use that. Then we get into the sessions with discussion and we grade them or give them the correct answers to the survey questions. Then they can take a look at the survey and say, aha, I'm communicating maybe a little more one way than I should be, or, maybe I see a better way to do some things. One of the big points about using this kind of exercise is that the information stays with the trainees. We never collect it. If they want to ask questions, fine, but it all stays with them.

24. *What People Are and Do:* We go for results-oriented performance appraisals. At the start of the training, we ask our trainees to describe their best employee. Most answers are like this: My best employee is loyal, dependable, cooperative, punctual, and has a good attitude. That's their best employee. Then we get into a discussion of results and standards and it suddenly dawns on them that they were describing their employees in terms of what people are, not what they do. We make a big point of that. What people are, and what they do, are two different things. If we want a results-oriented appraisal, we zero in on the do factor. It keeps the personality factor out and emphasizes results.

25. *Talent Hunt:* When we need help in training, we often use the talents of our line managers. They have the ability to do it and they

like to do it. We also find that the line people accept those managers more easily than they do us. They come across as more credible and they have support in the line. We've also seen remarkable behavior changes in the people doing this training. It's a tremendous development experience for them. They start to manage differently after getting involved in this training. So it is useful to train and use this talent.

26. *Test and Screen:* Instead of a test in selecting people for craft and technical jobs, we make a mini-course out of the foundation subjects and we let the candidates take the mini-course. Then we evaluate it and can tell whether or not they were capable of learning what we gave them. It also tests their motivation and interest in that subject.

27. *Use the Tube:* We like to use television as a training tool, but it is complicated. To simplify it, we videotape just somebody sitting at a desk reading the script. Then we key that into a series of slides, just like a regular slide-tape program. So in the training room, there is a screen on one side with the videotape and a screen on the other side for the slides, and you have your illustrated lecture. It's effective and it takes little time to produce.

28. *Get the Bugs Out:* In teaching technicians and craft people, we try to come up with a device that includes the same problems, or bugs, that the trainees are likely to find in the plant. At the end of the training, have them debug the machinery. It helps them, it builds their confidence, and it certainly tells you a lot about what they have learned.

29. *Listening Post:* Sometimes it's hard to get people together for training sessions because of the shifts they work and other factors. So we set up a listening post. Find a small office that's not being used. Put in a desk, a coffee pot — that's the most important thing — and a cassette player. Then put in a cassette library or whatever it is you want the people to have. Set it up on a 24-hour basis so that people can come in whenever they can work it into their schedules. You can cover a lot of people this way and it doesn't disrupt production

schedules.

30. *Repeat . . . Repeat . . . Repeat:* Training manuals often don't get read. Take a manual and record it on a cassette. When you have a new person to train, have him listen to the tape and read the manual at the same time. The most important part of this exercise is to repeat it several times. Your thinking process races ahead of your reading or listening speed, so your mind will wander when you listen once, but if you come back and repeat, it will wander at different places. So if you do this several times, the content pickup is good.

COMPUTER-BASED EDUCATION TESTS PILOTS, MANAGES TRAINING

United Airlines is using computer-based education to manage a large-scale pilot training program that will extend over the next five years. Due to retirements and increased flight schedules, United plans to train up to 1,800 new pilots between now and 1983.

"It's the first new-hire program in nine years," said Grant Beutler, manager of Training Program Development at United's Flight Training Center in Denver. *"When we started planning a criterion-referenced, individualized format for this program, it was obvious we would need more than new training materials and more classroom space. We also needed a quick and accurate way to test candidates, keep track of individual progress and make sure the instruction complemented each pilot's background in order to expedite the training schedule."*

After an extensive study of educational technology and techniques available for handling a program of such size and critical training tasks, United installed Control Data Corporation's PLATO computer-based education system with eight terminals. The system handles testing and scoring, prescribes study activities, displays pilot progress and provides data for evaluating the effectiveness of the instructional materials.

The terminals, linked to a computer located in Arden Hills,

Minn., display questions and problems about airplane operations. Pilots use the terminal keyboard or touch the screen to answer questions that are presented in the form of text, drawings and animated graphics.

Results of the pilots' first test determines what their training should include. This "study prescription" may be in the form of manuals and other written materials, films, videotapes and audiotapes that are available in United's new learning resource center. Pilots return to the PLATO terminals whenever they feel prepared for another test. If they pass, they have demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject; if not, they are guided to additional study materials and then repeat all or part of the test.

"With this method we don't spend time and money teaching pilots what they already know," said Beutler. *"Nor do we force them through elementary materials just to get to the information they really need. There's no other training technique available that enables us to approach the individual's learning needs in such a precise way."*

United's training specialists prepared nearly 3,000 questions that relate to 26 different aeronautical topics. These questions, along with simple instructions, were entered into the central computer through PLATO terminals. The system software formatted this information to provide the appropriate displays to the individual pilots.

Data generated by the pilots as they work through the various tests gives United training officials an opportunity to analyze the quality of the tests and instructional materials. For example, if a wrong answer is consistently given to a particular question, instructors know that the question may be faulty. Through the terminal they can easily delete or change it. This same flexibility applies when it comes to changing an entire test or including reference to new learning resources. But most important, noted Beutler, the system responds to individual learning needs in a very personal way.