Trends in Training

The Center for Accelerated Learning makes these sometimes rosy predictions for training over the next few years:

■ There will be less training in detailed, step-by-step knowledge and more in basic concepts and principles. Increasingly, people will be trained in how to learn and how to get and use information when they need it.

■ The emphasis in training will begin to shift from teaching to learning. That is, more attention will be given to how, why, and when people learn best.

■ In keeping with that, more control and responsibility will be given to the learner. And the trainer's role will begin to shift from "teacher," in the traditional sense, to learning facilitator, learning coordinator, and learning consultant.

■ There will be more emphasis on teamwork and collaboration in training

for everything from training design to training delivery.

■ Trainers will become more sophisticated. Rather than exercising a narrow specialty, they will be expected to be generalists, people of renaissance spirit who have a wide knowledge of (and responsibility for) the company's total business and organizational needs.

■ Training departments will provide for more decentralized training.

■ People outside the training department will have more responsibility for training others in the organization.

■ There will be a trend toward more integration (and fewer turf battles) between various training functions and departments in an organization.

■ As the general level of human consciousness continues to evolve in our culture, training in the use of the "higher self" for improving job performance and satisfaction will become more commonplace.

Complying with Affirmative Action Contracts

In the last 10 years, contract compliance has emerged out of affirmative action as a formidable economic function with many employers, organizations in the procurement award process. And, although the Reagan Administration is not numbered among the supporters of affirmative action, the laws still stand. However controversial and legally confusing they may be, it still appears that the development of such programs is more acceptable on a daily basis. Such programs often require resource planning, skill development, and implementation strategies by those charged with the responsibility for bringing minority/women business into the mainstream of procurement contracts. The *Official Contract Compliance Resource Manual* directly helps managers and staff research, plan, develop, implement, and monitor the working standards in the field of contract compliance.

Designed as the most timely resource manual on how to build minority/women business procurement programs, it serves as a text and audio training series. Specifically, the manual shows you how and when to operate an MBE/WBE certification program, be a good compliance investigator, and stop business "front" activity.

The manual also demonstrates how and when to use

■ standardized model plans for business goal subcontracting programs, construction business set-asides, and advance procurement shelter market programs;

■ a mentor-protege program in procurement and construction;

■ the legal aspects of affirmative action/contract compliance with case outlines (tape);

■ tight monitoring and evaluation systems;

■ a joint labor-management apprenticeship program.

Manual sections include resource tips, facts and trends, text of federal laws, and supplemental update. For information, contact Miracle Management Technology, Inc., P. O. Box 209, Flint, MI 48501-0209.

In Practice

Tackling the Management Crisis

Whether it's called mismanagement or nonmanagement, something has gone wrong with enough American organizations to begin talking about a management crisis. By no means alone in its coverage of the problem, the *Journal* has already reported on the deteriorating ability of American executives to communicate with their employees and each other (April 1986), computerphobia in the executive suite (August 1986), the willingness of decision makers—sometimes with fatal consequences—to ignore important data (September 1986), and the growing inflexibility of American economic institutions (October 1986). As with worker productivity problems, management must find the solution. But how do you solve it, if your are "it?"

The "it" varies from organization to organization. One interesting theory on the crisis was propounded in the summer issue of *Management Practice Quarterly*, published by Management Practice Consulting Partners (MPCP). In his article, John L. Neuman, a senior partner with that firm, places the blame for much that is wrong on "top management's misconceived attack on white collar overhead, which has reshaped corporate America and sown the seeds of disloyalty between management and employees."

The headlines tell the story: Giants like IBM, CBS, and Apple Computer have either cut their white collar staff or are planning to do so. According to *Business Week*, nearly 300 major companies have done so in the last 18 months.

Neuman likens this new wave of belt-tightening to destructive farming methods. "Trimming overhead fat," Neuman observes, "has reached near manic levels in many of the nation's largest corporations. *Fortune* estimates that in the past five years, over half a million white collar workers have been dismissed. Because of the thoughtless way these cutbacks are typically executed, they won't last. Inevitably, just as with the slash-and-burn techniques in agriculture, the jungle will always grow back again."

Furthermore, he adds, "In haphazardly junking the old paternalistic motivators, a number of corporations are creating morale and productivity problems that will haunt them through the 1980s."

In his article (the first of a two-part series), Neuman introduces a technique he calls overhead valuation analysis (OVA), which has been used by companies to eliminate unnecessary work and increase productivity. Neuman, who in the mid 1970s developed the OVA process at McKinsey & Co., argues that because management doesn't look at how overhead is created in the first place, most cutback attempts loose their legitimacy in the eyes of lower management and staff.

In contrast, he continues, "OVA provides an efficient discipline for scrutinizing all the many thousands of activities that make up overhead and turns for information and insight to the best source available as to where permanent cuts can safely be made—the workers themselves." Neuman's methods aren't as simple as they sound; many organizations have to remove the wall of mutual suspicion between labor and management before those kinds of questions are discussed. But those that can't may be faced with debilitating inertia as their more flexible adversaries compete with success. To make OVA work, Neuman advises applying the following ten operating principles:

■ *Focusing on work tasks.* Sound overhead management must focus on end products and services rather than on the people producing these items.
■ *Value assessment.* The value of end products and services must be determined by both suppliers and receivers.
■ *Goal setting.* A specific percentage overreach target for cost reduction is essential to ensure sound analysis and

innovative thinking as well as strong motivation throughout the organization.
■ *Line managers' innovations.* A bottom-up approach that gives line managers the primary responsibility for idea generation will stimulate hundreds of good cost-reduction ideas.
■ *Top management commitment.* The success of any overhead reduction program depends on top management's total and visible involvement in the process.
■ *Redeploying the surplus.* The development of a comprehensive human resource plan is recommended as a means of dealing efficiently and humanely with employees who ultimately will lose their positions.
■ *Communication imperative.* The deeper and broader the cuts, the greater the need for ongoing communications to deal with the job-threatening aspects of OVA by underscoring the company's commitment to the redeployment of freed personnel at all levels of the organization.
■ *Strategic dovetailing.* Overhead-cutting programs must be consistent with a company's overall strategy in order to be broadly accepted.
■ *Cross-department sweep.* Sound overhead management should focus on all indirect activities.
■ *Speed is of the essence.* Ideally, an overhead-reduction program should be accomplished in a relatively short period of time. If a program takes too long to complete, uncertainty, insecurity, and disruption may cause paralysis or panic.

For more information, contact *Management Practice Quarterly*, 535 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10017; 212/867-7948.

The Manual Manual

A how-to book for anyone faced with the task of writing and producing an effective manual, *Creating Effective Manuals* takes what is always a complex job and puts it in straightforward terms that apply to many needs. And it arms with solid arguments those who are trying to sell the idea of creating a manual in the first place.

Some areas the book covers include
■ how to elicit management support for the creation of high-quality manuals and a cohesive manual program;
■ how to standardize procedures for writing manuals and for setting up and maintaining an effective manuals program;
■ effective techniques for writing clear, consistent manual material;
■ the "hows" as well as the "whats" of all phases of manual design and development.

Once you've got your manual bound and ready to deliver, you can consult this book on how to use a simple distribution system that can be adapted to either manual or automated methods. Finally, should the need arise, a chapter on "maintenance" will help you keep your manuals up to date through revisions, amendments, directives, user education, writers' files, audits, and the delegation of responsibilities. Contact South-Western Publishing Company, 5101 Madison Road, Cincinnati, OH 45227.

Trends II

Take heart if you think your executive will never submit to the training he or she needs to lead your organization in an often brutally competitive marketplace. Here, especially for those of you who didn't make the St. Louis Conference (or the session in question), are the major findings Executive Development Associates President James Bolt revealed from his firm's 1986 survey of management training and development practices in American corporations.
■ Changes in business strategy and the need to implement these changes will become stronger forces in shaping management training and development.
■ The role of senior executives in the design and implementation of such training will continue to increase.
■ The amount of training will increase significantly, particularly for middle managers and senior executives.
■ Courses related to formulating and implementing strategy will increase significantly.
■ Internal, customized courses have replaced off-the-shelf and university courses as the primary source of executive training materials.

Employee Cross-Training

Submitted by Michael J. Maggard and Shlomo Globerson, professor and associate professor of operations management, respectively, at the College of Business Administration, Northeastern University, Boston. Globerson is also associated with Tel-Aviv University's College of Business Administration.

Productivity improvement often means getting more out of fewer employees. But are layoffs, automation, and coercion the only tools upper management wields in its struggle to remain competitive? According to research we recently completed, another option is cross-training: training employees to perform new tasks in addition to their usual tasks. The motive is simple: improved productivity.

Although our study must be seen as exploratory (we found few previous studies on the subject on which to build), we arrived at the following results that might interest organizations considering cross-training:
■ *Nature of responses.* The respondents (116 personnel managers and operations managers) were equally divided between service and manufacturing firms. While operations managers and manufacturing organizations desire higher levels of employee cross-training than do personnel managers and service organizations, they are not willing to invest as highly in order to obtain incremental percentage increases.
■ *Number of positions.* An interesting dimension relating to the concept of cross-training is the number of different positions (or jobs) within a department, since this is what provides the potential for cross-training. Among the respondents the average number of positions is 15, with 55 percent of the responding departments having at least seven different positions. A correlation analysis of the number of positions as a function of the number of employees revealed that, on average, a position is added for every 23 employees.
■ *Extent of cross-training.* Of the respondents, 88 percent state that at least 10 percent of their employees are cross-trained. In 45 percent of the respondents' departments, more than half of the employees are cross-trained.

Assuming an absentee rate of 10 percent, it appears that most organizations are able to shift employees in order to cover for absenteeism. It appears from our analysis that the "best" or "near-optimal" level of cross-training is approximately 50 percent.

■ *A comparison between manufacturing and service sectors.* Surprisingly, no significant difference was found in the actual level of cross-training between
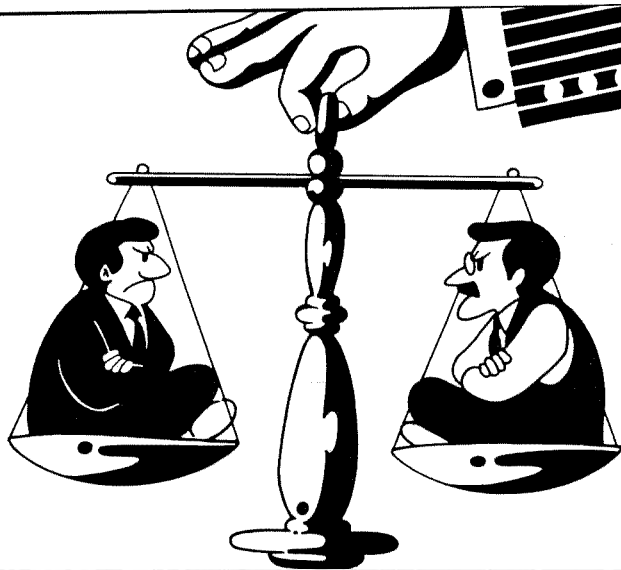
manufacturing and service organizations. Moreover, not even the desired level of cross-training was different. Possibly, it implies that managers in the service sector are not aware of the need to "inventory" services or that one way to generate this inventory is through cross-training.

■ *Cross-training investment.* Only 63 percent of the respondents said that they would be willing to spend money for cross-training. This finding seems to be in conflict with the extent of cross-training. The conclusion is that quite a few organizations have cross-trained employees as a result of circumstances rather than intention. For example, when employees move from one job to another because of change in needs and promotions, they were trained on the new job and, therefore, can be considered cross-trained.

■ *Reasons for cross-training.* Using the results of our pilot questionnaire, eight major reasons were listed in the current survey instrument. Increasing efficiency was selected as the number one reason by 32 percent of all respondents. Among the first ranking, the runner-up was not a clear choice, since absenteeism, job enrichment, and scheduling flexibility are of comparable importance.

Personnel managers ranked "job enrichment" higher than did operations managers, perhaps because the former view it as a vehicle to promote the quality of worklife rather than just to improve work performance. This may account for their greater willingness to pay more for cross-training than operations managers are. Finally, it appears that there is justification to establish wages as a function of the number of different positions a cross-trained employee can handle: first, if it pays for itself; and second, if it will not be obtained unless the extra compensation is paid.

For the complete survey, contact Michael Maggard, College of Business Administration, Management Sciences Department, Northeastern University, 360 Huntington Ave., Boston, MA 02115.