

Training For What?*

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Need for Reappraisal

The mood today is one of reappraisal. We are now living in Year One of the era of Sputnik. No longer can we use only last year's performance as our guide. No longer do we have the biggest and the best of everything. While others carry on their questioning of union practices, military spending, foreign policies, and education we have the opportunity here to re-study the goals and methods of industrial training.

As trainers, we must be prepared to answer the questions put to us by top management. We must be prepared to answer questions like:

- What do trainers have to contribute today towards company objectives?
- How up-to-date are the training methods we are using?
- How can trainers achieve more with less cost?

To answer these and similar questions I believe we must go back and review the conditions that gave birth to industrial training. We need too, to study the changes in business conditions, and search out present day trends. In short, we need to re-examine the foundations of training to see if they will stand firm under the stresses of tomorrow.

Creation of the Organization Man

The basis of modern industrial training can be located amidst the beginning

of scientific management methods. In the 1880's, Frederick Taylor, and other explorers of industrial methods introduced the principles of work simplification. Their central principle was that gains in efficiency would result from the breakdown and refinement of individual job elements. Business men rushed to install the new techniques of efficiency. They multiplied their production by compounded jumps. At the same time they compounded their task of management. Having reduced their production jobs to bits and pieces, they had to fit them together again in order to yield a smoothly functioning whole. This task demanded new skills in organization and administration. It demanded, too, the training of workers to follow standard work practices. The modern concept of industrial training was born.

The first training efforts centered on job methods. The burgeoning technology created thousands of new jobs that demanded new work methods and skills. As these jobs became more refined through time and motion study, greater pressures were placed on the workers to conform to standard practices. With less time needed for thinking about ways of improving his job the worker had more attention available for thinking of working conditions, pay, and other ways of satisfying his personal needs. Discontent

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flourished, and creative energies were easily organized into labor movements.

A new training need emerged. It was no longer enough to have overseers to ensure that employees gave a full hard day's work. Supervisors and managers had to be trained in the skills of "Human Relations." By World War II, supervisory training hit its stride as legions of workers were marched into management. They were drilled in the techniques of supervision and, full of zeal, they in turn indoctrinated millions of inexperienced people into the standard patterns of mass production. Their training in "Human Relations" very often boiled down to camouflaged ways of manipulating workers into a contented state of high hourly output. Training was aimed at creating workers and supervisors who could guarantee an ever higher quantity of goods up to standard. In short, the goal of many training programs was to produce the "group-directed" conformist.

After the war, training activities gained momentum and multiplied to meet the demands of industrial expansion. For the most part programs were merely elaborations of wartime patterns. Managers and workers dutifully went back to school to learn the latest techniques of group decision, human relations, communications, and participation. Both in companies and their unions the organization men were hatched to join the search for the most acceptable way to gain acceptance for procedural and organizational changes.

Challenge of Innovation

The same forces that set in motion industrial training served to stimulate

invention. Three hundred years of scientific discoveries exploded into twentieth century industrial expansion. Since 1900, ever-increasing investments in research have boosted the rate of innovation. Today, products and methods are often obsolete before they are through final planning. Well before Sputnik it was becoming clear to business men that only those companies would survive who could produce the most original concepts in marketing, production, and finance.

Now the cry is for ideas. The man of the hour is no longer the organization man—he is the creator. Managers are looking not for men who seek to please but for men who yearn to explore: not for men who ask "Is it acceptable?" but for men who demand "Will it work?"—not for those who search for security but for those who strain for the fresh, the novel, the original. The demand today is for the "growth-directed" individual. Here indeed is a challenge for industrial trainers—the challenge of an age of innovation.

If the new goal of training becomes one of encouraging growth, then the task of a trainer is clear. A man who seeks to educate must above all exemplify his teachings. Trainers dedicated to the principle of growth will therefore be called upon to set an example of a high rate of personal growth. As a guide for his personal growth and for his work with others he will constantly strive to discover and perfect his true self, and encourage others to do so as well. He will do this because he will have learned, in preparing for his new task, that to be one's self is the only person worth being.