

# Training & Development Journal

Published by  
The American Society for Training and Development

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Training & Development Journal, vol. 44, no. 5  
Training & Development Journal (ISSN 0041-0861) is published monthly by the American Society for Training and Development Inc., 1630 Duke St., Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313; 703/683-8100. National Society members receive this publication at the annual subscription rate of \$20 as part of their membership dues (for nonmember rates, see below). Copyright ©1990 by the American Society for Training and Development Inc. All rights reserved. Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the society. Editorial communications should be sent to the editor. Inquiries concerning nonmember subscriptions, advertising, and membership should be addressed to subscription, advertising, and membership departments. Nonmember subscriptions to U.S. addresses, \$60 per year. Foreign subscriptions at higher rates; write for quotation. Rates subject to change without notice. Single copy, \$6 postpaid. Printed in United States of America by The William Byrd Press, 2901 Byrdhill Road, Richmond, VA 23261. Second-class postage paid at Alexandria, Virginia, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send changes of address to Training & Development Journal, 1630 Duke Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.

BPA audit applied for August 1988.

## Tell Us What You Think

Contest! No prizes!

We're asking you to help us come up with a new title for the "Issues" column. Here's the thinking on this end:

We get letters but not as many as we'd like. We really like hearing from you. Maybe you didn't realize that.

Don't get us wrong. You *have* been writing. Our method is tried and true: every month we ask you to tell us what you think. And you do. Most eloquently, we might add. We just can't get enough feedback. We want to hear from you more often, and from more of you. We want you to keep responding to our questions, other letters, articles, and yes, important *issues*.

But maybe "issues" just doesn't cover all that. Perhaps we need a pithy phrase or some other weighty word. That's where you come in.

You probably already have an opinion on the column; we always welcome your opinion. Also, no one knows better than you do what the column conveys to you as it is and what you'd like it to be.

So...we invite you to take a shot at fame and glory. (Sorry, no matching luggage.) If we use your suggestion, we'll give credit where credit is due—print your name and everything. And when you send in your entry, feel free, as always, to tell us what you think.

Send your contest entries and letters to "Issues," *Training & Development Journal*, 1630 Duke Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.

## Training Reimbursement Policies

*The following letter is in reply to "Tell Us What You Think" (January 1990), requesting information*

*on training contracts as a condition of employment. Our curiosity was prompted by the news that a Dallas company is suing a former employee for \$9,000 in training costs.*

It is not uncommon for companies to "contract" with employees for external education. Our institution contracts with employees on a course-by-course basis. This policy is not entered into with the idea of being reimbursed upon termination as much as it is for "passing grade" incentive. If an employee terminates his or her employment before completing the class, however, he or she is financially responsible and must reimburse the association for the external course taken. Internal courses are not contracted or chargeable.

**Karen Gershman**

*Home Savings Bank  
Hollywood, Florida*

## The Dugan Laird Award

As members of the Woodlands Group, we want to thank ASTD for its continued support of the annual Dugan Laird Award for Excellence in Writing in the Field of Human Resource Development. The 1989 award of \$1,000 went to Stan Herman for his article, "How to Duck Decisions," which appeared in the September 1989 issue of *Training* magazine.

Dugan Laird wrote many articles and columns for virtually all the HRD professional journals. His book, *Approaches to Training and Development*, is considered a classic in the field. Laird, who died in 1984, based his writing on more than 30 years' practical experience, mostly with United Airlines.

In the five years since the first award was given, winning articles have come from such publications as *Training & Development Journal*, *Training News*, and *Training* magazine.

For the 1990 award, the Woodlands Group continues to encourage writing that demonstrates the standards of excellence espoused

# Training & Development Journal

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by Dugan. They are readability; a tone that is informal rather than academic; the use of unique devices to present ideas, such as dialogues or diaries; the use of humor where appropriate or relevant; the offer of practical, useful information; and expressive, descriptive writing that is neither stuffy nor presented as the "final word."

Thanks again for your help.

## The Woodlands Group

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**Editor's Note:** *We heartily agree with the Woodlands Group on what makes for good writing. Specifically, here are a few points we look for when we choose a manuscript for inclusion in Training & Development Journal: information, balance, analysis, originality, audience appeal, relevance, and truth.*

## In-House Video Departments Do Cut the Mustard

It was a pleasure to see an article in the *Journal* on video production ("How to Hire a Video Production Company," November 1989).

As an in-house video producer, it was a great disappointment, however, to see a reference early in the article about in-house video departments not "cutting the mustard."

An in-house department is essentially a production company within a company. It deserves a fair evaluation and shouldn't be judged in-

ferior because of its in-house status. In-house departments actually bring more to the project because of their knowledge of the company and of the videos that may have been shot before. Later in the article, the quote "full-time employees tend to make better team players than freelancers" supports my argument.

It should be noted that most people working as independent producers come from corporate video environments. And a growing trend is to have in-house video departments supervise outside production companies.

The writer should have instructed the reader to utilize the expertise of an in-house department to evaluate outside resources. Please help professionals like us prove that our company's hiring decisions were solid.

**Robin Hochstatter**  
*Kraft General Foods*  
*Glenview, Illinois*

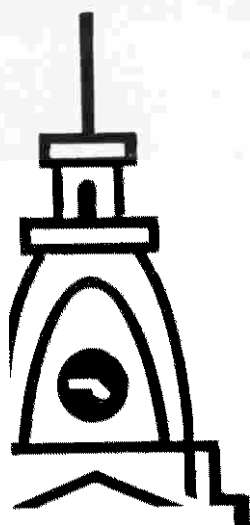
## Team Players Gain Turf

Many states have Laws of Adverse Possession, which were enacted in the early 18th and 19th centuries to resolve boundary disputes and determine land ownership. In essence, these laws established that an individual who maintains and uses a piece of land for any purpose gains possession, or ownership, if the use goes unchallenged for a specified period of time.

It is a rather curious phenomenon that this principle occurs in the business world today. It is usually associated with successful individuals, specifically those in the corporate pecking order who seem to continually influence not only peers and subordinates but superiors as well. Frequently, these individuals gain power and influence, or "turf," a little bit at a time.

These individuals almost always demonstrate a perspective that is more global than provincial. They are quick to demonstrate behavior that is focused on team objectives. They are generally not concerned with who crosses the bridge first.

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Their concern is that everyone makes it across.

They are usually the ones who accept responsibility without question. They are not concerned about whose job it is. They conduct themselves in a manner that suggests they have already assumed the next higher position.

They are usually the first to embrace visions and corporate commitments as their own. They are rarely, if ever, turf-conscious. They refuse to let "geographic boundaries" limit their impact on the organization. They recognize that they have the ability to influence others outside their immediate area of responsibility by being cooperative, by seeking feedback, and by being willing to support goals that may sometimes conflict with their personal objectives.

Every time these individuals assist someone outside their departments they are grabbing a little bit of turf, one inch at a time. These individuals gradually increase their territorial boundaries by accepting responsibilities that affect the performance of others outside their immediate spheres of influence.

They recognize that by acting out the role of the boss, by trying to think like the boss, and by making decisions that will have the greatest impact on the organization as a whole, they are soon perceived by their subordinates, peers, and superiors as being the logical selection for the boss's job. Therefore, like Laws of Adverse Possession, unless the positions maintained by these individuals are challenged, ownership becomes undisputed.

**John W. Plotrowski Jr.**  
Allstate  
Hudson, Ohio

### Education, Training, and Business

*The debate on what role education should play in business training continues. In October 1988 and September 1989, we published letters from Jeanne Glennon warning that education should not try to serve the needs of business. Replies*

*to Glennon's letters appeared in "Issues" in January and March 1990. Most were in disagreement with either Glennon's theories or her semantics. Now another voice is heard.*

In the past, our high schools were deeply involved in training for entry-level positions. They need to become deeply involved again. In an information-based economy, we can no longer afford to leave high school without being trained in communication skills: person to person, person to group, and person to machine.

Our secretary of education recently decried the fact that many of our children can't write. I submit that they haven't been trained to do so. If the truth be known, most businesspeople can't write either, or the business writing consultants would be out of business. Prospective employers also complain that applicants have poor verbal skills.

Imbed skill training within education. Businesses would no longer have to spend billions on remedial training. Put writing and speaking into every class. Put students in study groups and make them responsible for each other's learning. That is what's happening in business.

A business group in St. Paul, Minnesota, is establishing and funding a special learning group in conjunction with the school district. The objectives are to teach writing and computer-interface skills to high-school seniors. The cost is \$700,000. Five hundred jobs will be held for the graduates.

**John A. Sands**  
3M Center  
St. Paul, Minnesota

**"Issues"** is compiled and edited by **Haldee Allerton**. Send your views to *Issues, Training & Development Journal*, 1630 Duke Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.