

The Envelope, Please

The results are in, and it looks like it pays to practice HRD in a big corporation. In a new study, IBM, General Electric and Hewlett-Packard, respectively, were named by nearly four in five chief human resources executives of America's largest companies as having the most effective human resources functions.

To come up with those findings, Heidrick and Struggles, an international executive search firm in Chicago, surveyed the top human resources executives of *Fortune*-listed industrial and service organizations. "Three hundred executives responded."

David R. Peasback, president and CEO of the firm, says the results show the human resource function is gaining the recognition it deserves. "Eighty-nine percent of the country's largest companies designate a chief human resources executive at the corporate level," he found, "and 17 percent now rank at the senior or executive vice president level in industrial companies, compared to less than 1 percent in 1977."

Peasback noted the study also shows that "the human resources function,

which now plays a strategic role within most companies, is responsible for maintaining close relationships with top management, participating in business decisions and creating programs that contribute to the achievement of company goals." What's more, he says "today's chief human resources executive manages an increasingly international and less unionized workforce."

Other findings show that the typical human resources executive is male, born in the Midwest, holds a bachelor's degree in business, is married to his first spouse and earns \$140,000 a year. He has had three employers during his career. While one-third have spent their entire career in this function, almost two-thirds have held their current positions for five years or less. Nine in ten devote more than 50 hours weekly to their business and business-related activities.

Copies of the study, *Human Resources: Function in Transition*, are available at \$20 per copy, from Heidrick and Struggles, 125 S. Wacker, Suite 2800, Chicago, IL 60606.

I'll Be Home Late Tonight, Dear

A new study confirms what everyone's suspected for a long time but was, understandably, afraid to say: 10- and 12-hour work days are a waste of time. At least, they can be.

According to the firm that conducted the survey, The Goodrich & Sherwood Company in New York, a main reason that American managers work 10 to 12 hours a day and take work home with them is that they can't find the time to get the job done during the day. The reason: Meetings consume 35 to 40 percent of the average manager's day.

All too often, says Richard Miners, a partner of this human resource management consulting firm, meetings become a battleground of individual egos and serve as an excuse for postponing constructive acts. Miners recommends that companies interested in holding constructive meetings ought to take the following steps:

- Make the agenda highly structured, detailing items to be covered, and send it to participants at least a day in advance;
- Guard against making meeting environments too comfortable (one company Miners cites actually holds meetings without tables and chairs);
- Time is money: Insist that managers prepare and adhere to agendas so they can get back on the job quickly.

Diagnostics First

Submitted by Mary E. Settle, a management consultant with Coopers & Lybrand, Atlanta.

After much investment in productivity improvement programs, U.S. executives still find it difficult to convince middle and lower management that there is a productivity problem in the first place. Worse, organizations haven't been providing incentives for their employees to "work smarter, not harder."

How do you convince management to take a long, hard look at their operations to identify opportunities for improvement?

Surveying organizational climate is one technique that has proven successful. Nevertheless, though periodic employee attitude assessments are common, their application often is not timed to coincide with anticipated organizational change. Employees frequently report disillusionment and distrust of attitude surveys because of prior negative experiences (no feedback was received on the results of the survey, nor did employees perceive any change in the organization as a result of providing input).

The following are steps that you can take to ensure the success of diagnostics in positioning management to make organizational changes:

■ *Tailor the questionnaire to fit the needs of the organization.* Areas where changes might be made include organizational and department goals, work group problem solving, information and communication, productivity/customer service, work group coordination and cooperation, receptivity to change, working conditions, employee involvement, career opportunities, quality emphasis, managerial and supervisory competence, and compensation and benefits.

Management should select only those issues that concern them. For example, if the organization has no intention of making changes in its compensation or benefits program, these items would be deleted from the survey. This avoids creating false expectations in employees.

■ *Ensure that at least 80 percent of all employees in the organization—or of a targeted department—respond.* Survey administrators who mail questionnaires to employees are more likely to achieve only a 30 to 50 percent response rate. Reporting results from such a low response is misleading and makes the organization vulnerable to questions of reliability and validity. Do the results mean that only employees with positive (or negative) attitudes elected to complete the survey?

The survey should be administered during a regularly scheduled meeting or by establishing several times when large groups of employees can assemble. It also helps to have members of management explain the purpose of the survey, encourage attendance, ensure confidentiality and describe how the results will be used.

■ *Plan how management will respond to the results of the questionnaire.* Several

alternatives are available to the organization. One appropriate course of action establishes an employee involvement program to demonstrate the organization's commitment to employee concerns. Employees are given the opportunity to meet on a regular basis to identify and solve work-related issues.

An alternative (or complementary) approach is to establish task forces that consider specific issues raised in the survey. Task force members are drawn from several areas of the organization depending on the issue, and meet only as long as necessary to resolve the particular issues.

When forming either involvement groups or task forces, develop a management mechanism that responds quickly to the suggestions of the groups. Undue delays restrict effectiveness.

■ *Report results of the survey by level and department to all employees of the organization along with management's plan to address the issues.* Results presented by level and department allow management to compare differences of attitudes among groups of employees. Any other demographics that may prove significant (e.g., sex, age, race, shift) should be considered beforehand.

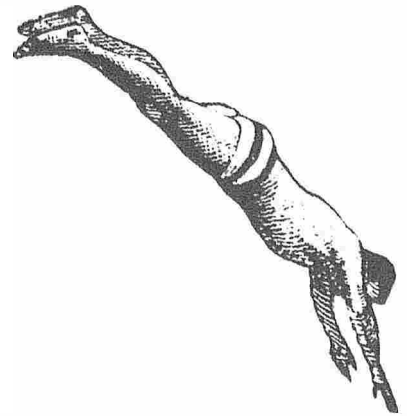
An effective presentation of the results can be designed by using colored viewgraphs depicting favorable, uncertain, and unfavorable responses. An unfavorable response rate of 30 percent or more should be considered significant. Viewers should also be guided to consider the percentage of "uncertain" responses as contributing to the percentage of "unfavorable" responses. These responses combined will reveal opportunities for improving the health and success of the organization—everyone's goal.

Before You Take the Plunge

If you've ever considered striking out on your own into the risky world of entrepreneurship, two new publications from the Center for Entrepreneurial Management could help. The first, "The Entrepreneur's Quiz," was developed from a series of questionnaire analyses performed by the center.

It not only gives you a good idea of what makes entrepreneurs tick, but it lets you construct your own profile to see if you've got the right stuff.

The second, "The Small Business Answer Book: Sources of Help for Entrepreneurs," is the place to go when you've decided to go ahead and take the plunge. To receive either publication, write the Center for Entrepreneurial Management, 83 Spring Street, New York, NY 10012. There is a \$1.00 postage and handling fee for each.



The Perfect Crime (So Far)

Prosecutors battling white-collar computer crime face this Zen-like question: Is an illicit act a crime if there are no laws against it? Because so much computer-related crime crosses state boundaries, the answer to that vexing question will be no until Congress legislates pertinent federal laws.

Computer crime is a growing portion of the \$40 billion U.S. Chamber of Commerce figures show is lost annually to white-collar crime. Some say that portion has risen as high as \$1 billion annually. Ironically, street crime has been decreasing as white-collar crime increases, in part because most law enforcement agencies target street crime as their primary concern. Under these circumstances, says Washington lawyer August Bequai, "It is little wonder that white-collar crime pays."

The subject should be of more than passing interest to trainers since this sort of criminal activity threatens corporate profits and sometimes destroys organizations. Bequai insists that it is up to trainers to "sensitize their organizations to the problem" of cur-

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tailoring and combatting white-collar crime.

Computer crime falls into a number of categories: vandalism, sabotage, information crimes, theft of services, property crimes and financial crimes. Motives vary just as much. Bequai groups them into the areas of personal gain, organization gain (over a competitor), game playing (test of skills), ease of committing the crime, "the department is criminal" (criminal skills taught by peers), hatred of the organization, and financial troubles due to drug problems, gambling and the like.

Surprisingly, many do not report computer crime when they discover it (a big mistake because policies that cover computer crime often have small print that says you must report all instances of such crime as soon as they're discovered). Bequai explains it is a case of "if you do, you're damned; if you don't, you're damned." This reluctance, he says, can be explained, among other reasons, by the absence of effective statutes, the expensive, time-consuming appeals process, the danger of public ridicule (especially for public corporations that depend on the confidence of stockholders), corporate politics and the embarrassment of victims.

Those interested in learning more about computer crime and its prevention can start with Bequai's 1983 book *How to Prevent Computer Crimes: A Guide for Managers* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158).

Ready for Trainerless Training?

Submitted by Thomas L. Quick, executive director of Resource Strategies Institute in New York.

For more than a year, a handful of American corporations have been experimenting with "Target Your Energy," a program from which the trainer, even as facilitator, is excluded. The concept originated in Sweden when, in the late 1970s, consultant Lars Wiberg was asked to develop a formulized process of change to help a corporation's employees perform more effectively. Since then, nearly 30,000

Scandinavian managers from all types of organizations have participated.

The design theme is the proper use of personal energy. As Wiberg's associate, Ingeborg Stemme, explains, "Normally the problem is not lack of energy, but that energy either is focused on the wrong things or not focused at all, causing waste, loss of creativity and suffering from conflict because goals and priorities are not well defined.

"In short, you're not clear about what you should be doing, how you should be spending your time, and that creates stress which in turn squanders energy."

The program's appeal, therefore, is that it helps an employee establish goals and priorities, focus his or her energy on them, and become a greater asset to the organization.

Self-forming groups

The training groups, according to Wiberg and Stemme, should consist of only four or five people who volunteer for the training. People volunteer for training that is not mandated or established as a prerequisite for advancement because they want to be more effective on the job. No one likes to be a bumbler.

Training Director Sam Phifer of Allied Stores, one organization that has experimented successfully with the program, openly uses the personal "sell." Phifer claims he has been able to recruit high-level managers by telling each prospect that the program "will help you to open up your life," that it "will assist you in knowing where you're going."

(There's a risk in sponsoring a program that will help your employees to see where they want to go with their lives. They may discover that their values aren't consonant with those of the organization and decide to go elsewhere. But if an employee doesn't really fit in an organization, he or she isn't much of an asset anyway.)

Self-discovery

The small group meets in five work sessions every other week, each session lasting from two to two-and-one-half hours. In each session, the group views a videotape in which a young manager, Alan Grayson, falls prey to recognizable pitfalls and learns how to avoid them to become more effective.

In the first tape, Grayson is woefully ineffective, with little or no control over his work—almost the image of a loser. In the subsequent tapes, he gradually sees how miserably he is performing and takes substantial steps to reach a relatively high degree of control. He learns how to keep from getting in his own way (self-sabotage), set goals and prioritize them and develop options and alternative behaviors for himself.

Following each viewing, the group discusses Grayson's dilemma. Between sessions each member's homework assignment is to identify his or her own destructive behaviors and impediments, and develop ways to gain more control. A planning instrument, participant's "to do" list, helps establish priorities and commitments for those tasks.

In the sessions, trainees discuss self-discoveries more easily because no one is looking over their shoulders. Each participant receives group support (everyone has his or her share of self-discoveries), and it is less possible that one's faults will be broadcast outside the meeting room.

The two weeks between sessions provide sufficient opportunity for participants to observe their own impediments to effective behavior and to experiment with different ways of doing things. Trainees have ample time to measure the relative success of their experiments.

The androgogical approach

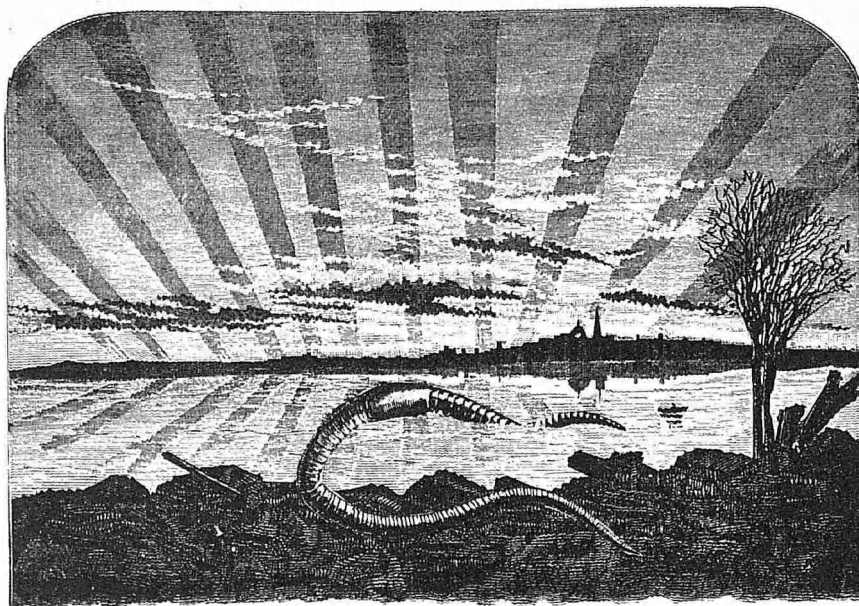
Insofar as the content of the training design isn't startling, the key difference from other designs on the market lies more with the self-guiding group. (It is, however, not leaderless, since the group elects its own leader, either for each session or for all.) There have been other self-guided approaches, such as sensitivity training, but it's important to know that the group is following a pre-determined path using the tapes, workbook, to-do list and agendas.

Trainers find that the self-guided group is more open, less resistant to training and tends to take more responsibility for training than they might if a trainer were present. The approach is consonant with the growing emphasis in this country on adult learning. When people can see a reason to learn new behaviors, when they are given the tools to help them to do so, when they receive support and reinforcement of those new behaviors, they are more likely to take "ownership" of the training and ensure its success. It's especially beneficial to an organization that has numerous, widely scattered sites or branches. There's no need for an extensive training staff or for train-the-trainer programs.

Drawbacks

What might be the disadvantages of this approach? Unquestionably some organizations' managers and trainers will feel queasy at being excluded from the process, of having to forego direct control over the trainees. They may feel more comfortable with objective feedback and measurements of change. Stemme's evaluation research in Scandinavia is subjective. More than 75 percent of the participants say they are more effective and perform with less stress. If you want feedback on the success of the program, schedule follow-up sessions either with the whole group or individuals. It's always possible to obtain peer evaluations of a person's increased effectiveness. But many organizations are loath to survey a trainee's peers. Managements that lack trust probably will not find this new approach attractive.

But for those who base relationships with employees and trainees on the belief that most people at work want to be more effective, the self-guiding approach is an answer. Simply by sponsoring such a training program, the organization's management can reinforce a message of trust and confidence.



Teletraining Network Listings

(Sunday, March 17—Saturday, March 23).

AM

- 6-7 *Sunrise Training*—When three trainers in the same town forget to set their alarm clocks the same day, something strange happens . . . and something wonderful.
- 7-8 *Good Training, America*—Brent fills in for Phyllis while she undergoes retraining at a stable outside of Lexington, Ky.

8-9 *Captain Kangatrainer*—Ant farms, earthworm colonies, Mr. Green-jeans on team building and more.

9-10 *Train-In*—Host Jack LaTrain trims hours off your flabby quality circles.

10-12 *Mr. Trainer Goes to Washington*—Three trainers sit around watching old Ingrid Bergman movies and refuse to return their phone calls.

PM

12-1 *The Edge of Training*—Is Brick all he really says he is? Or is Melanie barking up the wrong flip chart?

1-2 *I Train*—Reruns

2-12am *Jerry's Train-a-Thon*—Training orphans the world over will be hoping you make a contribution. Surprise guests will include the Feedbacks singing their smash hit, "Daddy's a Neurologist (But Mommy Won't Mirror)."

AM

12-12:30 *Monty Trainer*—Keeping the profession safe from itself.

12:30-2:30 *I Was a Teenage Weretrainer in London*—Lon Chaney meets the Journal staff on the other side of the grave.

2:30-6 *Gone With the Overheads (Part I)*—Everyone's fave at an hour no one is up.

6-7 *Sunrise Trainer*—Last one up's a rotten trainer!



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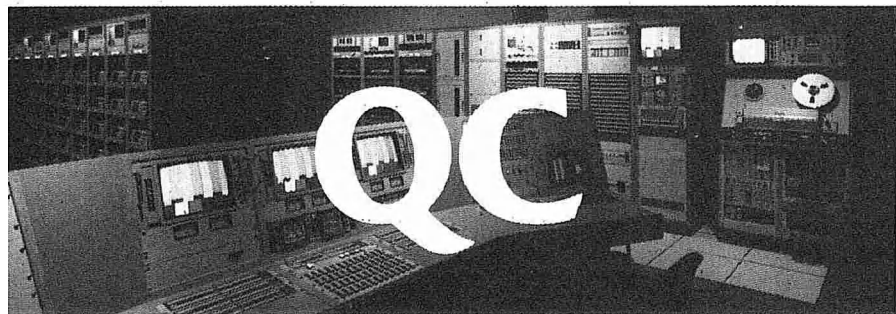
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