

The Hawthorne Effect

One of the Results of Training Evaluation at Hughes Tool

Charles C. Denova

Almost thirty years have passed since the "Hawthorne Experiment" was carried out at the Hawthorne plant of the Western Electric Company. It has become a classic illustration of general motivating factors for employees and how their beliefs influence their productivity and behavior. Hughes Tool Company, Aircraft Division, conducted a program to have members of supervision become *more* acquainted with the job knowledges and job performances of each of their new workers. The "get acquainted" program had these major features:

I. New Employee Orientation to the Program

The new hire was told what was expected and required of him both as a trainee during his training phase and as an employee during his em-

ployment with the Company.

II. Orientation of Supervision

The supervisors to whom the new employees were assigned were given an orientation as to what to expect from the new employees:

- a. basic skills taught,
- b. learning curve and individuals,
- c. close supervision vs. casual supervision.

III. Program Follow-up

Periodic reviews by the supervisors were conducted to determine:

- a. areas of new employee strengths, weaknesses, and/or versatility,
- b. supervisor and/or training department action for further employee development, either on the job or in the classroom.

The schedule of follow-up reviews with the new employees who were

Dr. Charles C. Denova

Manager, Training and Education, Hughes Tool Company, Aircraft Division, Culver City, California. B.S., Louisiana State University; M.A., California State College, San Diego; Ed.D., University of California, Los Angeles.

participating in the program was:

Week After Hire

3rd

4th

6th

8th

The Disguise

The foregoing program was conducted under the guise of an evaluation plan for a Company training program. The evaluation plan was conducted during the Structures Assembler Training Program. The plan included the specific check points mentioned above. To insure maximum participation by members of supervision in the "get acquainted" program, the General Superintendent of the Manufacturing Division asked that the training and trainee evaluation forms be completed at the appropriate schedule by each supervisor and be returned to his office for his review and approval.

The forms used during this program were basic guides to measure the areas as outlined in *Program Follow-up*, III. Although the training department personnel viewed the evaluation forms as useful tools to measure the effectiveness of the Structures Assembler Training program, the General Superintendent looked upon them as an excellent method to evaluate the effectiveness of his management team. Interestingly, the Foremen and Assistant Foremen regarded them as an excellent guide to appraising the performance of their workers.

Results

As the evaluation of the Structures Assembler Training program progressed, the forms proved beneficial for all of the areas mentioned above. The prime reason for this lies in the fact that members of supervision had to make several observations and con-

tacts with each of their subordinates—obviously an excellent technique of good management. Another contributing factor was that prior to the design and implementation of the Structures Assembler Training program evaluation plan, the Company did not have a formal performance appraisal for supervision to follow in order to evaluate the hourly workers.

Many members of the supervisory staff are using the forms as guidelines for performance appraisal of their employees—not only the trainees who participated in the training program, but also employees in other areas of responsibility and classification.

Merit Increases

For trainees who had not completed their probationary period of employment, merit increases were virtually unheard of prior to the Structures Assembler Training program evaluation. Almost all of the members of the first line supervision of the Manufacturing Division thought it was not possible to give a deserving worker a wage increase until *after* his probationary period of employment was completed.

When the evaluation reports were reviewed by the General Superintendent, he suggested that the trainees who were consistently being rated high by their supervisors be given a merit increase. The individuals who were in this group represented 29.62% of the total. It was interesting to observe that each level of supervision from the Superintendents down to the first-line supervisors (Assistant Foremen) took credit for "giving" the trainees the merit increases and that "they" had the courage to break a "Company" precedent.

The practice of giving merit increases to deserving new hires prior to the completion of their probationary period of employment has spread

throughout the Manufacturing Division. The employees and working areas include more than those that were participating in the Structures Assembler Training program.

Trainee Acceptance

Prior to the Structures Assembler Training program, trainees were not highly accepted by all members of supervision. The primary reason for this was many members of supervision had not taken sufficient interest to determine which of the new hires in his group had participated in a formal training program, and which of his new hires had not. Because of the training evaluation program, the supervisors were "forced" to keep close tabs on the performance of the trainees in their groups. Therefore, members of supervision knew who was in the skill training program and who was not. It seems reasonable to expect that the supervisor would compare the performance of his trainees from the Structures Assembler Training program with the performance of his employees not in the training program. At the completion of the skill training program, several supervisors felt that many of the trainees were performing as good if not better than some of the "old-timers."

Production and Morale

A high state of employee (trainee) morale developed during the evaluation phase of the program. This good *esprit de corps* of the trainee group was felt throughout the Manufacturing Division. The high plane of performance was achieved because the worker felt that supervision was taking an interest in him and his work. In fact, several trainees commented that they had never worked for a company where so many members of supervision had taken such an interest

in how they were performing on the job. (Remember, the schedule of evaluation required that the supervisors observe and rate their employees at least four times in an eight week period, and also, the General Superintendent was most helpful in putting "teeth" into this entire process.)

As a result of good morale, the trainees became productive rather quickly. Associated with this increased productivity were other somewhat less tangible improvements. These appeared to be a greater zest for work, more friendly interpersonal relations among the workers themselves, and significantly, an improved attitude towards management.

Labor Force Turnover

The new hire turnover rate is one of the major concerns in business and industry. The involuntary terminations for the trainees who participated in the training program was lower than the Company's average for the same period (trainees: 10%; Company 14.925%). The voluntary quits for the trainees was 13.333% while the Company average was 34.236%. The best inference that can be made from this is that labor turnover can be reduced through an organized program.

An adequate new hire orientation, a systematic job training, and the development of capable leadership in supervision do combine to lessen the dissatisfaction, insecurity, and the feeling of inadequacy in a job which are some of causes of absenteeism, deliberate truancy, and labor turnover.

Acceptance of Formal Training Programs

Since the supervisors of the Manufacturing Division were required to keep close tabs on the participants in the training program, they had an excellent opportunity to work with and

observe closely the personnel of the Training Department. Suggestions made by these supervisors were always taken under consideration for the improvement of future skill training programs in the Company. This close interaction and interrelationship has caused a much improved atmosphere to be created between all concerned. This was due, in part, to the fact that members of supervision "saw" the benefits and the results of a formal training program.

Summary

The results of this "get acquainted"

program was predictable based on results of the Hawthorne studies. While the outcome was not surprising, the data does illustrate the importance of the inclusion of an organized follow-up plan in each training program. Also, it is most important that the follow-up program be conducted by a member of the participants' supervision, not by the members of the company's training staff. This is not to say that members of the training staff are not acting as consultants behind the scenes . . . because they are . . . would you believe, *should?*

Entries Open for Handicapped Awards

The President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped is accepting entries for its "1968 Employer of the Year" awards. Two employers, one with more than 200 employees, the other with 200 or less, are honored annually for outstanding hire-the-handicapped programs.

The awards are plaques donated by the National Association of Manufacturers. A national publicity campaign is built around the presentations ceremony.

The President's Committee is also seeking nominees for its "Handicapped American of the Year" award. The Handicapped American will receive a trophy from the President of the United States at the Committee's annual meeting, April 30, 1969.

Nominations for both awards close November 15, 1968. Details are available from the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, Washington, D. C. 20210.

