

Training Must Be Sold

Every good training program involves two selling jobs: one in selling the program to management, one in selling it to the trainees. Failing to "make the sale" in either case means an end to even the finest of programs.

The need to "sell" trainees on a program is obvious to each of us, whether the selling job is labeled "motivation," "getting the employee's interest," or "getting the point across." Isn't the major task of the training director to "sell" trainees on the proper way of doing their jobs? Every training director worth his salt must be an expert salesman in this respect or he wouldn't last as a training man.

Not so obvious—and possibly not so palatable to most of us—is the necessity of selling our program to management. Many of us tend to think that since we were handed a problem and came up with the answer in the form of a specific training program, the acceptance of the program by management should be automatic. Not so. No department head in any company enjoys the luxury of automatic acceptance and approval of his programs, regardless of how sound and profitable they may be. He has to sell them.

Once we recognize this fact, once we accept the personal responsibility for selling the company the programs we know it needs, this phase of our job becomes clearly defined. Normal selling principles apply. Here are a few:

1. Know your product. That is, know the problem your program solves, understand your program thoroughly and be certain you can explain it in reference to the specific problem. Remember that when a problem actually exists, management *wants* to be sold the right solution.
2. Know your prospect. In this case you usually have a lot of prospects, ranging from the department manager who will be using the program to the executive who must approve it. Consider each man. What is likely to be his major personal interest in your program? Profits? Safety? Costs? Morale factor? Each man's individual interest is your selling target. Zero in on it.
3. Plan your presentation in advance. Anticipate questions and be certain you have sound answers. If there are a few questions you hope no one asks, you'd better take a longer look at your program. It must have some weaknesses.
4. When you are certain your program is sound, when you have carefully considered its appeal in reference to the "pet peeves" or "sacred cows" of your audience, when you have thoroughly prepared yourself and your presentation—then, and only then, sail into that meeting with your confidence showing and lay your program on the line.

If it's good, if it solves a pressing problem, if it's well thought out—in short, if it's a professional job of which you are proud—they'll buy it.

But you've got to sell it!

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