

# Advice to a Rookie Trainer

Develop a new workshop and teach it—tomorrow? Welcome to the world of training, kid! Sounds like you could use some help.

By STEVEN K. ELLSON

It's your first day on the job. You're the new trainer and you sit at your desk, very pleased with yourself, and look forward to the first steps of an exciting career. Right off the bat you begin reviewing management development programs for first-line supervisors and technical training for equipment operators. Optimism carries the day, but apprehension lurks in the background.

Your company seems headed for hard times. They just announced that shifting demographics and market upheavals may require employee layoffs. Managers and staff alike dread the painful prospect of

Welcome to the world of training. These first few months of your rookie year will alternately thrill and scare you. Get a head start by understanding some of the basic issues and problems you might face.

- How will you determine your role in the company?
- How do your bosses define a rookie trainer's success? How do you define it?
- How will new business realities affect, say, that recently promoted quality assurance manager? Remember, she's a line instructor now too. How will her performance affect yours?
- How might an unprofitable quarter or

ing approaches or face the possibility of job reduction or extinction. To demonstrate your worth, recognize and resolve issues before they become problems. If you continually prove that you provide a vital service to your employer, you'll be on your way to ensuring that you keep your job.

Today—your first day—you want to dive right in! You're confident, you've worked hard to sharpen your subject-matter and training skills, and you want to make a good first impression. You are eager to develop and teach your first successful program.

Curb that eagerness, but not your enthusiasm, for just a minute. Before you leap, look. Recognize some of the realities that affect every new kid on the block.

The people with whom you work will compare you to the trainer you replace. Your bosses may sing your predecessor's praises, or they may warn you not to make the same mistakes he or she made. Ignore the comparisons and establish your own standards of educational excellence. This decision shows colleagues your confidence—you *can* solve problems and be productive.

But what about other departments—your internal clients? You must prove yourself to them too. They may not know how valuable you can be. You must demonstrate to managers and staff that you, and you alone, know how to help solve problems. This skill is more valuable than teaching ability. Remember that you are the educational expert. You are a credit to your profession.

## On your first day, start recording statistics that show how your services contribute to productivity and profit

trimming qualified personnel from the payroll. You wonder how these changes will affect your duties—and your own job. But at the same time, you recognize that times of flux place your skills in demand. You'll be training and retraining, analyzing what's already in place and predicting what ought to happen next. Maybe throw in a little organization development on the side.

*Ellson is manager of educational services at Memorial Hospital in South Bend, Indiana.*

fiscal year affect training on a companywide basis? What will happen to your department?

### Make your mark

When top management focuses on increased productivity, cost reductions, and staff cuts, rookie trainers must learn to survive, and that means developing techniques that make you and your job necessary to the company's well-being. Indeed, staff development personnel like yourself must either adopt proactive train-

## Market yourself

This confidence building prepares you to market your services. You can market programs in one of several ways.

You can develop a program at the request of another department. Garner support by including someone from the department as a cotrainer. The cotrainer won't want to fail, nor will he or she want to appear unenthusiastic about the program. The cotrainer will have to support the program to save face.

A second marketing approach is to develop a program for one of the company's VIPs or vice presidents. Design a program that solves a problem and then let this person proclaim your educational talents. It matters little whether or not you actually teach the program; just be certain you receive the credit for *developing* it! Your problem-solving skills may be the key necessary to help the department successfully solve its own problem.

When the word circulates on the grapevine that you are responsible for these successes, your position will become secure. Line presenters will ask you for advice and tricks of the trade; this represents an invaluable opportunity. First, you will tap into resources helpful to your own programs. Line presenters have the subject-matter expertise staff trainers need. Second, you will develop presenters who model your own effective training style. And finally, the presenter who is now comfortable because of your help will undoubtedly support your future educational program efforts. This support solidifies and validates your position in the organization.

## Keep track

Top management doesn't care about the nuts and bolts of what you do. They don't worry whether you develop a program, stand up and teach a class, coordinate an entire curriculum, or consult with other departments. Instead, administrators favorably respond to increased productivity and profit.

On your first day start recording statistics that show how your services contribute to those increases. Keep monthly records detailing

- the amount of time you spend developing new programs, noting all research time, meetings, and other activities by program;
- the number of hours you spend teaching programs;
- how many people attend each program you develop or teach;

■ programs you coordinate with other departments;

■ the departments with whom you coordinate, noting how frequently you coordinate, how much time you spend at it, and who participates in the resulting programs;

■ consultations—educational, management development, career development, and so forth—with other departments, the frequency with which you consult each department, time spent on each, and the results you achieve;

■ problem-solving sessions in which you take part, including department names and number of participants;

■ tangible results of your programs—problems solved, behaviors changed—and all notes of praise you have received from company VIPs.

At the end of each quarter and year, total the figures and prepare for your bosses concrete evidence of your financial worth to the company. If you really want to make an impression, compare the hourly cost of your salary and benefits to an outside con-

sultant's comparable rate. The savings will stand out clearly, but be sure to note that your ready availability to handle everyday training needs counts for a lot too. You may not need this data early in your career, but calculating these data and comparing Year One to Year Two will benefit you and your company.

## Get support

Rookie trainers need a professional and personal support system. In large staff-development departments, you will need collegial support as well as your supervisor's encouragement. If rumors of layoffs or staff reductions circulate you'll need to know what's happening. In smaller departments where only one instructor provides educational programs to numerous departments, you need support too. Develop a network of colleagues who can critique your educational programs, help you brainstorm ideas, and teach programs for you, if necessary.

Also seek out a personal confidant. Training pressures can overwhelm, but throwing coffee cups or screaming—prevalent coping techniques—won't im-

prove things. Your confidant can help you vent your emotions. He or she can help you share your confidence and successes or provide a sounding board for secret feelings of inadequacy. The role of the confidant is to befriend you. So don't pick your supervisor; this person will be a frequent source of irritation and consternation.

Your confidant can also help you understand the organization and its personnel. Learn to use a reliable but informal grapevine to stay on top of company happenings. Most such news-gathering networks include people from all departments and all levels. Make a point of speaking with managers, professional staff, and clerical employees. They can let you know the latest gossip, fill you in on hirings and firings, and warn you about upset VIPs. The grapevine will help you monitor the success of your educational programs and keep you informed of office politics that could sabotage your efforts.

The quality of your work doesn't always determine your success. Sometimes it comes down to the quality of the rolls, cof-

## To demonstrate your worth, recognize and resolve issues before they become problems

fee, and soft drinks you serve to learners. Sometimes your success depends on the amount of support, credibility, and influence your supervisor enjoys. Understanding politics and how things get done will help you do your job and help you get a handle on the organizational mood and personality. In many cases your first crisis will be omitting Mr. X as a "cc" on a memo—bad move, for offending Mr. X could hinder future training programs. Keep your ear to the ground and listen for the rumblings that affect your work.

## Trust your supervisor

You need to be aware of your new supervisor's plans for working you into the departmental team. Your first assignments can give you a good idea of what to expect. One rookie recalls her first training mission: develop a conflict management workshop—and teach it the next day. Another trainer reports that two weeks after he was hired, his boss asked him to submit the following year's budget without reviewing the company's training needs.

Expect your supervisor to throw you an early curve. You may get 30-minutes'

notice to teach a two-hour program on a subject about which you know very little. The boss isn't trying to limit your effectiveness. It's merely a test of your ability to cope with the stresses that plague training departments. In addition some supervisors maintain they must "unfreeze" old habits and loyalties to previous employers and "refreeze" new norms. If you find your head spinning or find yourself confused about how the organization functions in the first few months, depend upon your supervisor for direction. The "unfreezing-refreezing" technique also helps you learn who you can trust—your supervisor—and who you can't.

### Some closing thoughts

Do the problems identified above sound overstated? Have you encountered problems harder to handle? Can a rookie really survive the first few months? What about economic turmoil?

## Learn to use a reliable but informal grapevine to stay on top of company happenings

In spite of the difficulties, you can cope with these problems by continually and perceptively assessing the company, your department's political position, and the perception others have of your skills. You must learn to act proactively, rather than respond negatively or hesitantly. You must believe you are the most competent individual your employer could have hired for the job.

It may take three months, six months, even a year or more to become comfortable in your position. During the adjustment period you may have many sleepless nights and rough days. On Tuesday morning you may feel confident you understand

the company, only to realize on Tuesday afternoon you don't understand how your department operates, let alone the whole organization.

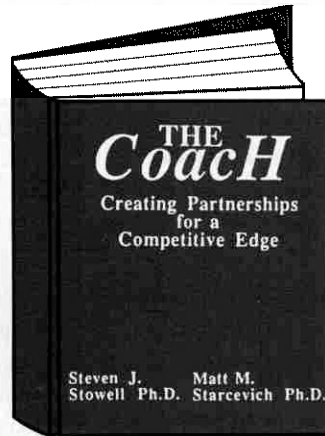
The bottom line for you, the rookie trainer, is confidence, perseverance, and flexibility. Understand the multifaceted nature of your job. The problems may seem insurmountable, but you can find the rewards in presenting quality educational programs or facilitating a group problem-solving session that brings positive change.

And later you may achieve the greatest reward: mentoring other rookies. You will help them become mature, competent, and successful professionals. Just like you.

## A GUARANTEED way for leaders to tap the full potential of employees and beat the competition !!

### WHY BUY THIS BOOK ?

- First research based book on the subject in 9 years
- Based on 10 years research and observation of effective coaches
- A more in-depth model and training design
- Specific/clear definitions of effective leader behaviors
- Exposes the current myths of leadership:
  - One Minute Management
  - Behavioral modeling or mimicing actors is effective for skill development
  - Coaching is a simple process
  - Overreliance on problem solving skills during a disussion



1st. edition  
sold out in  
4 months !!

**\$19.95**

### TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Coaching: a commitment to leadership
- A vision of leader-employee partnerships
- The 8 Steps of Coaching
- Get your act together before you meet
- Courage and the agony of coaching
- Avoiding the flagrant errors
- The art of being confrontive/ and caring
- Excuses: the harsh realities of change
- The highest forms of leader support
- Get better results and be less controlling
- Give yourself permission to do the positive things you already know
- The 10 underlying values and beliefs
- Your role after the talking is done
- When coaching and prayers aren't working
- Coaching and inspiring the motivated employee

### CONTACT CMOE:

P.O. Box 2505  
Bartlesville, Okla 74006  
(918) 333-6609

P.O. Box 21103  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84121  
(801) 943-6310

### ONE DAY WORKSHOPS

(VARIOUS DATES AND LOCATIONS)  
Experience the complete training program(cases, videos, manager/employee surveys, workbooks, live demonstrations, and instructor manuals) that has improved over 10,000 manager's effectiveness. **CALL TODAY FOR THE SCHEDULE**