

Letter of the Month

Psychology Yesterday

Paul Huff writes in cc:You (August), "Psychology Today surveyed its readers recently, asking them what they wanted in a job." As most of us know, Psychology Today went out of business many years ago. The survey Huff refers to was actually published in the May, 1978 issue. This hardly qualifies as "recently."

Huff goes on to state, "If readers of Psychology Today are representative of workers as a whole—and I think they are...." Even Psychology Today never claimed that its readership was representative of any larger group; that's one of the reasons for the low circulation that led to its demise. The readers who were attracted to this magazine (me included) were a self-selected minority with an interest in psychology. This made it impossible to generalize the results of their reader surveys to any larger population.

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Practical Theory

I enjoyed the "Thirty-Three World Class Competencies," but the first one gave me a problem: It says, "Adults want practical knowledge, not theory." The third one says, "Adult

learners are diverse and unique." Well, if learners are diverse and unique, how can Margot Weinstein make such a statement in as in number 1? I'm an adult, and I do want theory. Kurt Lewin said "There is nothing so practical as a good theory." In The Fifth Discipline, Peter Senge says that if you use a tool without knowing the theory, the tool may work in one situation and not in another, and you'll never know why it bombed. You can't even pick a tool unless you know why you're using

it—the value of knowing theory in the first place. So, let's amend number 1. The helpful trainer can present the theory and then help the learner apply it so that it is practical. Because once you learn a theory, you can apply it in multiple situations, making it practical (useful) all the more.

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A Little Bit O' Stereotype?

I just opened your magazine to read the article "A Little Bit O' Soul" (July) and found the graphic of a black man behind a counter whistling to be offensive. It is stereotypical of an image of people of color that was popular decades ago. I believe it is important that, as people, we examine the myths we hold to see if they affirm and encourage others, particularly those who are different from us.

Name withheld

Editor's note: Thank you for making us aware of the possible (but unintended) interpretation of the illustration. We address the issue of diversity in every art meeting, so perhaps it shows enlightenment that the stereotype never crossed our minds. Nevertheless, we shall keep our antenna up.

Correction

In "The New (beep, beep) Rules of HRD" by Chip Bell and Oren Harari (August), GE chairman Jack Welch was mistakenly identified as retired. Welch is not scheduled to retire until April 2001.

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