

Whither Practicum?

By now, you've noticed that this section sports a new moniker: "In Practice." Why the change? It's really rather simple: "Practicum" no longer fits.

You could look it up. Practicum, a Latin word with a Greek antecedent, literally means "a course or group session emphasizing practical application of theory." This section of the *Journal* does that, but it does more. It also keeps you up to date on items of interest not strictly in the human resource development field. The stories might refer to business and government—worlds where most of today's training is done. Or, they might cover notions or events that stand a chance of altering the way you think about many things—including your field.

Finally, there is the odd story that pops up from time to time, the only purpose of which is to give your minds a rest from too much seriousness.

Keep sending your material as you would to the old Practicum section and, as always, keep it short and to the point. In Practice stories are designed to be read quickly, when there isn't enough time to read the longer features that make up the bulk of the *Journal* editorial product.

Robert Bové
In Practice Editor

10 Techniques for Drawing Out Trainers

Submitted by Jerry W. Gilley, School of Occupational and Adult Education, Oklahoma State University.

The following steps can help trainers who want to move from being disseminators of information to facilitators of learning:

■ **Focus on Climate**—The instructor uses the background and experience of the learner to introduce new ideas and deepen awareness. A non-threatening climate is produced when the instructor employs acceptance, empathy, self-disclosure, understanding and attentiveness.

■ **Reflection**—Bring to the surface the feelings and attitudes behind the learner's words. This prevents hidden agendas and deep-seated feelings from hindering the learning process.

■ **Silence**—A difficult technique to master, silence allows the learner time to think through what has transpired and can slow the pace down as necessary, if things are too hectic.

■ **Paraphrasing**—A feedback technique, paraphrasing the learner's responses leads the learner toward the right message and shows that the *instructor* is listening.

■ **Questions**—Directed at individuals or the entire group, open and closed questions serve as a catalyst for group discussion and can be a rudder to guide the flow of conversation. Open-ended questions allow the learner to widen his or her perceptions. Closed questions require specific responses needed in the learning process.

■ **Clarification**—Either the instructor or the learner can make clarifying statements that place the learner's feelings and attitudes in a form clearer to all concerned.

■ **Interpretation**—"What I hear you saying" is the most common way to introduce an interpretation to the learner. Interpretations deal with cause and effect relationships and allow learners to grasp the full meaning of what they say.

■ **Encouragement**—Everyone needs a pat on the back from time to time. Encouragement can prompt action or counter feelings of inadequacy. "Please continue" and "That's interesting, tell me more" are typical encouraging phrases.

■ **Tentative Analysis**—Some interpretations are "hunches." Tentative analysis is micro-summarization of single ideas instead of groups of thoughts. "Then you mean" and "In other words" are phrases that precede tentative analysis.

■ **Summarization**—Different than paraphrasing, summarization follows discussion. Conveying the essence of the trainer's message, it can be done either by the trainer or the learner, depending on the mood of the class. In either case, agreement or disagreement with the summarization should be discussed to make certain all understand the message.



There's No Lunch Hour Like No Lunch Hour

Accountemps, a New York accounting, bookkeeping and data processing temporary personnel service, recently ran a survey of 100 "Fortune 1000" company vice presidents and personnel directors to answer this age-old question: "How much time does your company allow most of its employees for lunch?" The average answer, for those of you who still believe in the one-hour lunch hour (or, for that matter, the free lunch), is 48 minutes. That's 12 under par, you might say, if you often like to drive a few golf balls during your 4/5-hour lunch hour.

The flip side of the coin, according to Accountemps Vice President Marc Silbert, is the answer to one of the other questions his firm asked in the survey: "How long is the average lunch that most employees actually take?" The average answer? Forty-nine minutes—one minute more than the average company allows. Or close enough to give pause to the more crotchety among us who believe employees are always a half-hour late getting back to their desks after lunch.

Blunderama

Submitted by Lisa Stricker, Lobenz-Stevens, Inc., New York

Clear communication in the office often suffers when staff members, who know each other well, become too comfortable in their work situation. Because office communication skills are vital, Olsten Temporary Services, Westbury, N.Y., has developed the following list of common office blunders to help ensure that their personnel avoid poor communication.

■ **Forgetting.** Thinking you'll remember—and therefore don't need to write it down—is a universal office blunder. Flight number. Date. Phone number. Which restaurant, hotel or motel reservation. In whose name. Someone should invent a round pen you can wear as a finger ring.

■ **Guessing.** "I think that's right" are fatal words. If anyone must ask, there's grounds for checking. Spelling, checkbook balance, postage, and how much vinegar is in the sauce can't be guessed. Look it up. Guessing is amateurish.

■ **Telling.** "Mr. Smith there?" the caller asks. An obliging secretary may say, "No, sorry, he's in Miami." Betrayal? Maybe. Telling where Mr. Smith has gone is fine only if the caller is his superior in the company. A bright office worker never tells *anything* about *anyone*. The inquirer could be a competitor. Or someone after Smith's job. Or maybe after your job.

■ **Skimming.** Why people don't read what they type, sign, approve or forward is one of the mysteries of office life. It is not enough to skim for obvious typos or wrong amounts or incorrect dates. Everyone who has responsibility for a paper must read it for meaning, for sense, for significance.

■ **Not asking.** "You've a caller. The name is Cargo or Starkle—something like that." You don't recognize the name, you could scream. "Something like" is asking for trouble. It's juvenile (if you don't know better) or selfish (if you don't care enough to ask). You have to ask them to "spell it, please" or "say it again, please."

■ **Misplacing.** You took the 3x5 card from the file, used it, then what happened to it? You got out the contract, looked up the names, then where did it go? You filed the mail, now you can't find the Gudellor letter. Where are your wits? What are you day-dreaming about? You must pay attention to what you're doing. Don't misplace things!

■ **Assuming.** "But you *always* go to the budget committee meeting on Tuesday mornings at 10:15," you say to Ms. Superior, who is angry because only *she* didn't know the meeting was postponed. She was the only one to go to it, and everyone smirked as she crept back to her office. Make it a rule: Never let anyone leave for any meeting without confirming that it is being held.

■ **Pencilling.** Ever had a phone caller wait while you looked for a pencil? Ever held up dictation while you looked for another pencil? Ever said, "May I borrow a pencil?" Yes to any of those questions means you are either a vice president (people hand you a pencil without your asking) or a beginner (you haven't learned to keep a pen or pencil within reach every instant of the day). Make it a habit.

■ **Whiching.** Which of the three drafts is the final one? Which of these letters is the one they decided to use? Which copies are for whom? Beware the "Whiching Hour" in the office—it's a terrible moment. You must date everything, discard the rejected immediately, keep your own set of minutes of every conference. Know which is which.

■ **Suprising.** One of the boom-lowering moments in any office is the slaughtering of innocent newcomers who surprise others by "improving" something without discussing it in advance—improve the arrangement of the weekly sales report, improve the letter style the employer is accustomed to, and so on. Offices welcome ideas and improvements only if they are discussed first.

■ **Not noting.** The desk calendar is wondrously useful. Obviously it should include trips, appointments, recurring committee meetings, etc. Such desk books prevent conflict, so they should also include anything else that might create conflict in functions: anniversaries of the staff members' joining the company, birthdays (family, staff), receptions, showers, medical appointments, tailor fittings. Keep your calendar up to date, full of reminders and details—and covered or closed.

■ **Holding.** When you're waiting on the

telephone, 10 seconds seems like a minute, a minute like eternity. A wait of 19 seconds is annoying, 20 seconds unforgivable, and 30 seconds insulting. If it will take you more than 10 seconds to resolve your double call, you must ask whether you may call back. Or lose a friend or a customer.

■ **Lying.** Ben Franklin is credited with the advice, "Never lie. Someday you may have to, and you'll get away with it only if you have a reputation for never lying." So, you don't say (if it isn't so) that the letter is already in the mail, the box is on the truck, your boss is en route, or anything else that could destroy your credibility.

The 100 Worst Spelling Threats

(A list of the most frequently misspelled words, as developed by Olsten Temporary Services)

accept	exceed	principal
accommodate	except	principle
acknowledgment	existence	privilege
acquaintance	experience	probably
across	explanation	procedure
affect	extension	proceed
already	February	professor
among	foreign	quantity
analysis	fourth	questionnaire
apparent	government	really
appearance	guarantee	receive
arrangement	height	recommend
attendance	immediately	reference
beginning	incidentally	referred
benefited	its	referring
business	judgment	schedule
calendar	laboratory	separate
canceled	loose	similar
coming	necessary	sincerely
committee	oblige	stationery
confident	occasion	strictly
conscientious	occurred	their
controversy	omission	there
convenience	omitted	too
convenient	opportunity	undoubtedly
criticism	original	unnecessary
description	paid	using
difference	pamphlet	volume
disappoint	personal	weather
effect	personnel	Wednesday
eligible	possession	whether
endeavor	practical	writing
equipped	practically	
especially	preferred	



More on Time

Submitted by Jacquelyn Flowers, ASTD Field Service Representative at National Headquarters in Washington. Her tips on controlling time appeared as part of a longer article in the November 1984 issue of *Western City* magazine. She completed the original feature one month ahead of deadline.

If you're like me, there will never be enough time to do all the things we imagine. But with whatever time you have, how do you want to spend it, both professionally and personally? Focus on real time control by following these points:

- Be daring enough to believe that you can plan your own life.
- Make every 24-hour day an investment for you by making better time management a daily habit.
- Clarify your objectives by putting them in writing.
- Make a to-do list everyday, but be sure to include your daily objectives, priorities, and time estimates, not just random activities.
- Schedule your time every day. Be sure to allow flexibility for the unexpected and for interruptions. First block out time for your most important work; then allow time for unscheduled events, emergencies,

"brush-fires," routines and new opportunities; then tightly schedule commitment to selected "outside" activities.

- Make sure the first hour of your work day is a productive hour.
- Focus on your objectives, not on activities. Your most important activities are those that help you accomplish your objectives.
- Overbudget: allow yourself 10 percent more time than you probably need. This way, you'll feel good with the time you have left over. It took me twice as long to finish this article as I had originally planned, but with my schedule, the extra margin was a bonus.
- Tap into the power of your prime time. In recent years, scientists have offered proof that different people work best at different times of the day. Structure your work efforts so that your most important challenges will face you during your best two consecutive hours (6-8 a.m.? Noon-2 p.m.? 9-11 p.m.?)

■ Delegate whenever and wherever you can. In the past, I was not lucky enough to have someone to whom I could delegate work, or so I thought. We assume that we can only delegate down. Be creative in your delegation. You can delegate up and over. Being able to decide which tasks you should tackle personally and which tasks you should delegate to others is an important a time management decision as you can ever make.

■ Some people receive many invitations to functions. Accept only the best, that is, those of real interest to you. Learn to say "sorry" to the others.

■ There *is* life after information/issue overload. Take it from time-management practitioner Councilwoman Iola Williams of San Jose, who handles information and issue overloads by dealing with it as a part of her planning system. Williams handles overload by not giving in to it. She analyzes everything she does in terms of her objectives. Her advice is, "Find out what you do, when you do it, why you do it. Ask yourself what would happen if you didn't do it. If the answer is nothing, then stop doing it." Williams is also, handles overload by exercising (three-mile walk every day), takes trips, networks, and uses support systems (i.e., family, friends).

■ Link activities together that can be done either in rapid succession or

simultaneously. Working smarter, not harder, is the key to good time management.

■ Use your phone to your best advantage. You can do this by making conference calls instead of traveling to a meeting; call in your answers instead of writing letters or memos; have on your schedule a place to make calls and another time scheduled for returning calls held for you; if possible, have someone screen your calls.

■ Alan Lakein, in his book, *How to Get Control of Your Time and Life*,¹ and R. Alec Mackenzie, in his book, *The Time Trap: How to Get More Done in Less*,² have suggested the following:

Don't waste time feeling guilty if you blow your time management plan. Do better tomorrow.

Try to enjoy whatever you're doing. Time doesn't move fast enough but it seems to.

Listen actively. It really saves time.

Take time for yourself—time to dream, time to relax, time to live.

The goal of time management is not to cram more work into 16-hour days. Rather, it will give you an opportunity to enrich your life with more of the things that will make you a better adjusted, more effective person. You'll have more fun, too!

References

1. Lakein, A. (1973). *How to get control of your time and your life*, New York: The American Library, Inc.
2. Mackenzie, A.R. (1972). *The time trap*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.



Utilize This

Submitted by Gary Blake, director of The Communication Workshop in New York.

Do you start your letters or memos with phrases such as "Enclosed please find" or "Pursuant to your request?" Do you end your communications with "Please do not hesitate to call?" If so, you are using three of the top 10 most frequently used—and most pitiful—phrases in business.

Our consulting firm surveyed more than 4,000 letters, memos, reports and proposals at insurance companies, banks, manufacturing firms and communications companies. Included in the survey was work written by engineers, accountants, secretaries, computer specialists and bank executives, among others. We found the following trite phrases the most common indicators of business-ese:

■ *At this point in time.* Immortalized by John Dean at the Watergate hearings, this phrase did wonders when he wanted to avoid incriminating details. Since time always has a point, businesspeople can skip the "point in."

■ *Pursuant to your request (or, per your request).* If it's true that Americans don't trust lawyers, why do so many businesspeople want to sound like them? "As you requested" should do for the rest of us.

■ *Please do not hesitate to call.* Picture some poor soul with hands trembling, wondering if his call will disturb the order of the universe. Once a good attempt at friendliness, this phrase is now a cliché.

■ *Enclosed please find.* If you haven't hidden anything, there's nothing to find. "I've enclosed" or "Enclosed is" should work.

■ *Thanking you in advance for your cooperation.* Thanking people for what they haven't done yet is like holding a gun to their head and saying "Do it!" It's polite to thank people for what they've already done.

■ *It should be noted that.* A patronizing phrase that sounds as if you expect the reader to take notes.

■ *Please contact me.* If you don't want someone to tackle you, you probably mean to say "please call" or "please write."

■ *Unique, (modified with very, most, or*

truly). Every idea, it seems, must be a unique one, and just to make sure the reader understands just how unique an idea really is, the unpardonable modification of a superlative is used.

■ *It has been recommended.* A favorite with people who fear that if they do the recommending and the idea flops, they'll get blamed. Passive language of all sorts is popular.

■ *Utilized.* Nothing is simply "used" anymore. It is always utilized. Like other IZE words (strategize, prioritize, finalize), it sounds oddly formal.

The overuse of these words and phrases is partly the result of insecurity. When new employees get on the job and are asked to write their first letter or memo, they usually turn to a security blanket—the filing cabinet—to see how their predecessors wrote. So all the outworn, antiquated phrases that have been used since the 19th century continue to be used.

Maybe someone should clean out all the filing cabinets.

The Art of Vulnerability

Courage and vulnerability, argues executive development expert Alan Cox (last heard from in the Sept. 1984 *Journal*), are not mutually exclusive. Vulnerability, he says, can serve some useful purpose.

"Revealing inadequacies in a given set of circumstances can result in (an executive's) betterment."

Here's his simple exercise for determining just how vulnerable you are.

Test Your Vulnerability

To test your vulnerability, answer the following questions by circling the response that most closely matches your typical behavior. Remember, you have everything to gain by being objective, and only you will see the results.

1. Is it difficult for you to admit ignorance on a subject to your associates?
Usually/Often...Sometimes/Seldom.

2. Do you consider brainstorming with your associates a waste of time?
Usually/Often...Sometimes/Seldom.

3. Do you believe that your associates think of you as thin-skinned?
Usually/Often...Sometimes/Seldom.

4. Do you believe associates think of you as one who welcomes new ideas?
Usually/Often...Sometimes/Seldom.

5. Does apologizing to an associate whom you've wronged in some way come easily to you?
Usually/Often...Sometimes/Seldom.

6. Do you have a confidant in your company with whom you share your most candid thoughts and emotions?
Usually/Often...Sometimes/Seldom.

7. Do you think you have a firm grasp as to which associates in your company should *not* be trusted with your candid thoughts, knowledge of your limitations, and plans for new initiatives?
Usually/Often...Sometimes/Seldom.

8. Are you fearful of being labeled naive, immature, or idealistic when attempting something that hasn't been tried in your company before?
Usually/Often...Sometimes/Seldom.

9. Are you curious? Do you like to play with ideas?
Usually/Often...Sometimes/Seldom.

10. Are you willing to create "a little tension" in your company?
Usually/Often...Sometimes/Seldom.

Vulnerability Index

To determine your score on the vulnerability quiz, check your answers below. For each correct answer, give yourself one point. Mark the rating category that corresponds to your total score.

- | | | | |
|--------|---------------------|-------|------|
| 1. S/S | 6. U/O Superior | | 9-10 |
| 2. S/S | 7. U/O Good | | 8 |
| 3. S/S | 8. S/S Satisfactory | .. | 7 |
| 4. U/O | 9. U/O Fair | | 6 |
| 5. U/O | 10. U/O Poor | | 0-5 |

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