

How To Do It Kit For Trainers

Using Athletic Coaching Analogy for Job Training Coaching

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It has been suggested that the problem of supervisors accepting their role in training is one that has perplexed training and good management people for years. And, it has indeed.

Webster defines the word accept, "To receive (a thing offered) with a consenting mind." But, how many supervisors accept training with an open mind? How many supervisors say training is anything but a waste of time? Frankly, we wonder sometimes how many supervisors have a mind.

But, isn't training good? Isn't it free and painless? Doesn't it help the supervisor get the job done? If these things we have been saying for years are true, then, why is this matter of supervisory acceptance so difficult?

Perhaps there is need to take a new approach to the problem. And, it might be that the approach that we took could reasonably be fruitful for you to explore. Our approach is simply, "Coaching--A How To Do It Kit For Training People."

We were faced with this very same problem of supervisory acceptance of training responsibility. However, with an executive development, middle management and other training programs upon our heels, we were pressed to come up with the answer. An answer that would give the first program participants, all top executives, immediate insight and knowledge of their training responsibility. In short, we wanted these supervisors to do the training job *we thought* they should be doing.

At first, we took the traditional "duties and responsibilities" approach. It appears that we have reached the point of diminishing returns. Frankly, we couldn't even generate much enthusiasm with this approach among our own training staff. However, we happened upon a recent article, "Increase Your Management Coaching Power"¹, which gave us an idea.

As this was another term to structure into today's organizational concepts, we went back to analyzing the idea of a

1. "Increase Your Management Coaching Power" by Lincoln Atkiss and William M. Read; *Business Horizons*, Spring 1961, School of Business, Indiana University.

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coach in the traditional "duties and responsibilities" manner. To our surprise, we found that a coach is another term for supervisor. But better than this the coach in fact portrayed a supervisor in a more dynamic fashion than his counterpart in our highly structured business organizations.

At first, we thought that all we had accomplished was that a coach is another term for supervisor. And, everyone knows that we have enough title structure confusion without adding another title.

But, was this the case? Certainly not, for we had stumbled upon supervision in its clearest form. So clear that few did not know what we meant. However, we would be the first to admit that recognition and acceptance did not come easy with us any more than training acceptance will come with your supervisors.

Principles of The Approach

Yet, we were still faced with the matter of presentation. "How to do it." Back to the "idea" board. The answer did not come immediately for most of us have difficulty in extending ourselves into undisciplined areas of thought. Frankly, we also fought the analogy we were leading into between the sophisticated business organization and the professional athletic organization. We were to learn differently later. However, we did discover the following three principles which we would need in our presentation:

1. It had to be real;
2. It had to show the dynamic part of the organization in action; and
3. It had to show that training was an integrated process within the total

management spectrum.

Although we did not recognize it at first, our first premise was the key to our presentation. In short, the presentation had to be real.

Perhaps the underlying reasons why training of supervisors fail to carry over are:

1. The training given is typical of the supervisor's job; and
2. The training undermines the supervisor's very own job.

Athletic Coach Analogy

Since supervisors deal with real situations, we knew our presentation had to be real. Coupled with these problems was the expectation of difficulty drawing an analogy between a coach and a supervisor. For this reason, we looked for something real and, as we stated in our earlier analogy, we may have found it in today's professional athletic coach. There are many who could fit the description but we selected Vince Lombardi as our real coach because of his recent success and also because the training program was held during football season. In addition, Lombardi fit the traditional "duties and responsibilities" pattern in an easy to understand manner.

However, we were still faced with the real problem of presenting the organization in action and also presenting training as an integrated process within the supervisor's spectrum. Frankly, we had no immediate answer, but a short time prior to the start of our top level executive development program, we chanced upon a film entitled, "The Violent World of Sam Huff."

Indeed, a strange title for a management film. However, our training staff

sat through preview after preview with one question in mind, "Would this football-oriented film do the job of giving our top executives insight into their role as trainers?" We felt it could.

You're probably wondering why we felt the film, coupled with other materials, could do the job. Perhaps it can best be answered in this fashion:

1. Our first premise stated that the presentation had to be real. This is equally true of premises two and three. This film was real and dealt with real supervisors.
2. The second premise stated that it had to show the dynamics of the organization in action. The film showed an organization doing real things, not the stereotyped office scenes and similar management films we plague our supervisors with.
3. A different pattern was used giving rise to a refreshing point of view. It was an actual film. Filmed where the organization did its work and it didn't go through the same old plot, blunders, heroes and villains we, as training people, have disciplined ourselves to.
4. Finally, the film answered our third premise which stated that training is part of the total management spectrum. Unlike what many training people and managers might want to believe, training is not some "special package." Rather, training is an integrated process within the supervisor's spectrum.

Supervision is getting things done through others and the film's beguiling subtleness personifies this point in Head Coach Jim Lee Howell of the New York Giants. For the supervisor, the coach, cannot do his employees' work for them,

i.e., pick up the ball and run with it; he must get the work done through others, i.e., the coach cannot go on the field but has to train his men to get the job done.

Presentation of Kit

Our first presentation was entitled, "The Executive's Role in Employee Development," and was given in the following manner:

1. Short lecture on major aspects of supervision with correlation between coaching and supervision;
2. Briefing and showing of the film, "The Violent World of Sam Huff"; and
3. Discussion of predetermined questions centering around the supervisor's role in training.



Figure No. 1

The session was opened with a few candid remarks on "training problems." The participants were also advised that we had a "How to do it kit" which we would be happy to give to them and which we felt might help them solve some of their training problems.

The kit consisted of a three-foot mock-up picture of a man (Head Coach Vince Lombardi of the Green Bay Packers in street clothes) and it is suggested that the answer to their training problems lie within this man. (See Figure No. 1)

The participants are then asked to identify the picture of the man in front of them, Figure No. 1. Believe us when we say, "You'll get some real answers here." However, to date, we have shown the picture to over 100 people and only one has identified him.

Following this, we run through the clichéd expressions of supervisory duties and responsibilities as illustrated in Figure No. 2, drawing no analogy to coaching at this time.

However, following this discussion, we reveal the identity of the mockup man to the participants and then freely discuss with them whether or not he "fills the bill" of an effective supervisor in terms of duties, responsibilities and accomplishments. (Your local newspaper's sports editor can give you an excellent rundown on his accomplishments.)

Following on the heels of this, we acquaint the participants with the film that they are about to see. Prior to the showing of the film, they are established in "buzz groups" to handle pre-established questions which center around training responsibility,—such as:

1. What is the role of the coach?

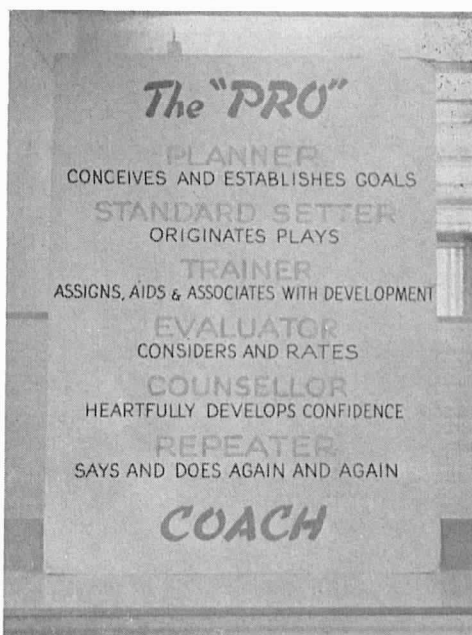


Figure No. 2

2. How does the coach's role differ from a supervisor?
3. What does the coach give to the players?
4. What do the players get from the coach?
5. How does the coach determine what types of training to give?

Other questions can be used as well as role-playing situations but they should be so structured as to permit the supervisor to openly discuss and hopefully bring about insight into his training responsibilities. At the same time, your questions will insure that the participants look beyond the good football picture that it is.

Program Acceptance

Perhaps this "How To Do It Kit" is the needed new approach. Perhaps not. However, we do have some evidence that indicates that acceptance is coming

about, but nothing that could stand up under a scientific evaluation. Yet, a few months prior to our executive development program presentation, a goodly number of the participants were puzzled over a recent training policy issuance that placed a considerable degree of responsibility for training on their shoulders.

Following the program, their questions seemed to disappear. One participant even stated, "This film has given me considerably more insight into my job than any other book or film I've ever seen. I won't forget it."

Frankly, this is only one illustration of what may be done. We don't say that this "How To Do It Kit" will solve your problems. Yet, coaching to us has proven to be a dynamic concept in clear supervision. It is a real one, showing the organization in action and showing training in its proper perspective in the manager's spectrum.

It has also given us a new field to struggle on. We'll be glad to have you enter onto this field with our "How To Do It Kit For Trainers." Try it—it could help you with your acceptance problem.

Letter To The Editor

Need For "Compromise Kit"

I am writing in answer to Mr. Bassler's Pathetic Fallacy: "Here Lies The Danger" in the March 1963 *Journal*.

The very survival of human kind is threatened by the pathetic fallacy that compromise means "accepting less than the best." Stubborn men—pridefully certain of the rightness of their positions, certain that the "middle-way" means surrender of principles and mediocrity—are not heroic figures, except in the most tragic sense.

These days the continuance of life itself depends not on the spirit of a Cyrano de Bergerac with his unsullied white plume, but upon the spirit of a Henry Clay, or a Gautama, who sought peace in the middle ways.

Because men in international councils, filled with personal and national pride, hold the pathetic fallacy that compromise is evil, we stand on the precipice of horrendous destruction.

The question is, do we have the time to grow up into the mature grace of knowing that almost never is our way the best way, but rather, only one view of the good that all men are seeking—after their fashion.

What we need today, personally, professionally, globally, is not a sermonette on the evils of compromising, but an instruction kit on "how to compromise effectively." On how men of conflicting principles can communicate with one another in order to arrive at rational *modus vivendi*. The training director who develops this kit will need to tell us a lot about insight, human awareness, communications skills (with emphasis on listening and empathy), and most difficult of all—humility.

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