

Whose Responsibility Is Training?

The Relationship Between Line and Staff Training Roles

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Would you agree (A) or disagree (DA) with the following items from the "Supervisory Inventory on Human Relations?"¹

1. A well-trained working force is a result of maintaining a large training department?
(A) (DA)
2. The personnel or training department should be responsible to see that training is done in all departments.
(A) (DA)
3. The training needs of a department should be determined by the supervisor in charge.
(A) (DA)

These items raise the question—just who is responsible for training? Is it

the training department? Is it line supervision? Is it both?

Most of us training people are uncertain about the answers to these questions. At one time, we will say that line management has the responsibility and the authority for training. We tell them that they are actually the "training director" for their department. We training people then become advisors and helpers.

At another time, we assume a stronger role and become more aggressive in planning and implementing training programs and activities. We set up training classes and require attendance by participants. We arrange for attendance at outside pro-

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1. "Supervisory Inventory On Human Relations," Kirkpatrick & Planty, Dr. D. L. Kirkpatrick, 4380 Continental Drive, Brookfield, Wisconsin 53005.

grams and require reports when they return.

Can we argue with either of these approaches? Should we change our roles as training people to fit a situation? Should we wait around for line management to ask for our services? Are we overstepping our role by assuming the responsibility and authority for training programs and activities? Let's look at the roles that must be defined for the line manager and the training manager.

Role of the Line Manager

The line manager is accountable for production—quality, cost, quantity, schedules, etc. He needs to have the responsibility and authority for supervising trained people who have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to do the job efficiently. If he needs trained people, he must have control of the training activities for his people. He should not be forced to take his people off the job to attend training classes unless he feels it is desirable. He should not be forced to have his subordinates exposed to principles, approaches, and techniques that are being taught by people outside his supervision.

Therefore, the role of the line manager is very clear. He should make the final decisions regarding training activities for his subordinates. These activities can be divided into two types—"on-the-job" and "off-the-job." In regard to the on-the-job training, he should be directly involved in coaching activities. Also, he should make the final decision regarding any kind of a performance appraisal or review program that is designed for improved performance. He should not be forced to accept a program that has been developed by the training or personnel department.

Regarding "off-the-job" training activities, the line manager should de-

cide what kind of training is needed. He should control subject content for training classes. He should control the time and money that is spent.

In summary the line manager has the responsibility and authority to control all of the training activities of his people. He should not be forced to do anything regarding training unless he feels it will pay off in terms of productivity, efficiency, improvements, morale, or any other objectives he has.

Role of the Training Manager

It may seem that the training manager's role must be a very passive one—waiting for the line manager to come asking for help. He is a staff man whose function is to serve line management.

But as a staff man, he has certain responsibilities—perhaps without enough authority to carry them out. In the absence of authority, he has to use approaches to get acceptance and enthusiasm from line management.

To be specific, I feel that a training director has the *responsibility* to see that training is done in all departments. I'd go one step further and say he has the responsibility to see that *effective* training is done in all departments. The role of the training manager is to carry out this responsibility and to do so without the authority to require line management to accept and implement the training programs that are planned by the training department.

Training Manager vs. Line Manager

It becomes clear that both the training manager and the line manager have the training responsibility with the line manager holding the authority. And it becomes obvious that there are going to be differences of opinion about the amount and kind of training that should be done. So we are

apt to have a contest—training manager vs. line manager with the line manager as referee and judge.

Let's consider four possible approaches that the training manager can use:

1. Provide whatever help the line manager requests.
2. Help the line manager determine the training needs of his department and help him develop a program to meet his needs.
3. Develop an effective training program and sell the line manager so he will want it.
4. Develop an effective training program and gain enough status and power so line management will not dare disapprove.

Let's look at these four possibilities one at a time.

1. Provide Help as Asked

This is a fine approach, especially if line managers are training oriented. If enough line managers are desirous of help from the training department, the training manager does not need to do any selling. He has all the "business" he can handle. And he will be kept busy providing training help as requested. The role of the training man is to be sure that the training is effective. And if he can't do the whole job himself, he must enlarge his department to get the job done. Line managers will back him up in his request for an assistant because their needs are not being served.

2. Assist in Determining and Meeting Needs

This approach can also be very successful. It is partly selling and partly providing help as asked. The training man should stimulate the line manager to think about his problems and to help him determine which problems can be solved (all or in part) by training activities. The training man is

oriented to helping the line manager solve problems. In so doing, the training man must communicate and sell his training know-how and capabilities to the line manager. There is no pressure on the line manager. He will use the training manager's help only if he feels it will help him meet his objectives without costing too much time or money.

To be successful in this approach, the training manager must have a thorough knowledge of how to determine training needs as well as the ability to plan and implement training programs. He should also be oriented to providing a service to line management.

3. Develop a Training Program and Sell It

This approach requires a training man with three strong qualities:

1. A thorough knowledge of training activities and programs.
2. Salesmanship.
3. An ability to follow-through and deliver a quality program.

A training manager with these qualifications can be very successful. Some line managers are willing to give this kind of a training man a try. If he can deliver, they will be pleased and will probably ask for more. Also, one satisfied line manager will tell another line manager that it is a good training program. And as long as the line manager is convinced that the training department is providing a service that is worth the time and money, the training manager will be successful in fulfilling his responsibility to see that effective training is being done.

4. Develop a Training Program and Force Acceptance

Some training people are able to carry out their training responsibility by enjoying the status and power which makes line managers reluctant

to "refuse help." Under this approach, a training man can develop a program, perhaps sell it to the top man, and then put it into operation. Line managers will participate whether they think it's effective or not.

This kind of approach can be successful if the program is effective. It may get started because line managers don't dare refuse to participate. But it will gradually fade away if it is not effective.

If the initial program is successful, the situation can change into one of the three that have been previously described. Power and status may become irrelevant and the training manager will be effective because of the acceptance and enthusiasm of line management.

Summary and Conclusions

Three questions were raised at the beginning of this article. According to the test scoring key, the "correct" answers are:

1. A well-trained working force is a result of maintaining a large training department?
(A) (DA)✓
2. The personnel or training department should be responsible to see that training is done in all departments. (A) (DA)✓
3. The training needs of a department should be determined by the supervisor in charge.
(A)✓ (DA)

These answers were correct as they apply to supervisors and foremen. The purpose of these questions (and others in the Inventory) was to emphasize the training role of line management.

If these questions were aimed at the training manager, Question 2 would

be "agree." Perhaps Question 3 would also be reversed and would become "disagree" to show an important role for training people in determining needs.

We training people must recognize our responsibility for effective training in our organizations. In order to meet this responsibility, there are at least four ways of getting started. And it doesn't make too much difference which of these ways we use.

The real secret of our continued success is to provide practical help which will be enthusiastically received by line managers. If we do provide help in solving their problems, we don't have to worry about the fact that our responsibility for training exceeds the authority we have to carry it out.

Our role as training managers is quite similar to that of Medical Doctors. They too are "staff people" as related to the patient's father and mother who are "line managers." They too have *responsibility* for the health of their patients without the *authority* to force a member of the family to take a medical exam or to take the prescribed treatment. So they must employ the same kind of approaches that a training man must see.

There is just one difference between a training man and an M.D.. An M.D. is not allowed to advertise and promote—even if he has no patients requesting his services. We as training people must advertise, promote and sell our services in case line managers don't ask for help. Once we have sold our services, we must deliver the goods. And then, we will find ourselves in the pleasant position of fulfilling our training responsibility by providing help as requested.