

# DEVELOPMENT OF A TRAINING MANAGER

*the American Oil Company case*

Rapid technological expansion causes equally rapid changes in the jobs of many people during their work lives. Frequently a job must be completely redefined or a new job created. This kind of change is not characteristic only of single levels of responsibility; it involves the functioning of an entire company. Change on any level affects every other level; the need for a new design affects not only the design engineer but the retailer and the salesman as well. Because of changes in roles and responsibilities, every employee must now regard education as a continuous process.

Adjusting to a new role requires that a man acquire new skills and, often, new attitudes. Yet a man chosen for a new job usually has finished his formal education years before that job was envisioned. The case presented here suggests an approach to the problem of mid-career education in industry.

During a long-term program for organization improvement based on a process of continuing individual and group development, the American Oil Company in Chicago, in cooperation with the Industrial Relations Center of the University of Chicago (IRC) found that improvements were needed to insure that their salesmen, dealers, and managers in the marketing department were adequately trained to do their jobs effectively and to cope with changes in their responsibilities. It was decided that the new post of training manager should be created. This new position was created not only in response to the need for improving the company's training process but also to upgrade the status of training and development in order to maximize returns from their investment in this area.

## SELECTING THE CANDIDATE

But who would fill this post? Would it be better to bring in a training and development expert from outside the company, or would someone from within the company be more effective? A training expert would, of course,

have a thorough knowledge of training theory and techniques but would not be familiar with the American Oil Company and its particular attitudes, values, and culture, or its program for organization improvement. This unfamiliarity would be a considerable obstacle to his effectively applying his knowledge in solving the company's problems. On the other hand, a company man would have a thorough knowledge of the company, the functions of its various departments, and the programs it had already developed to deal with its problems.

Since a principal objective of the organization-improvement process is to make the client organization aware of its needs and help it become better able to handle them, American Oil management decided that the new training manager should be appointed from within the company. He would be chosen on the basis of his educational background, his experience, his attitude toward development, and his self-expressed needs for further training and development.

After reviewing the qualifications of several candidates, the company selected a college graduate whose last position with the company was regional marketing manager. As the new training manager reviewed the duties of his new position, he felt that he should: (1) review and evaluate his career in relation to his past experiences and future responsibilities, (2) develop his managerial skills for appraising manpower training needs, (3) learn training theory and techniques applicable to his job, and (4) review the current best thinking and practice of organization and management.

## HOW TRAIN?

What would be the best way to train and develop the new training manager? Two alternatives were proposed: the man could participate in a split program, continuing in his present job on a part-time basis, or he could devote all his time and energy to learning. If

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the company chose the part-time plan, it seemed obvious that his effectiveness on the job and in the development program would be lessened because his efforts would be divided. On the other hand, full attention to the development program would remove him from contact with the marketing department and its activities.

In light of these considerations, the IRC proposed a full-time program for mid-career training that could be tailored to the particular needs of a man and his company. The program was planned to last about a year. If the man had merely taken a year off to go back to school, he might have been restricted by the formal curriculum of the institution. In this case, the man would be able to develop his own curriculum, which would be suited to his needs and to the demands of his new job.

All the resources at hand were taken into account in designing the program. Fortunately, the intern and his family lived within commuting distance of both the company's general office and the University of Chicago. This would allow him to spend one day a week in his office at the company, to keep in contact with developments in the company throughout the internship. In designing the internship program, the following facilities were taken into account: (1) the Industrial Relations Center on the University of Chicago campus, (2) the Management Development Seminar given by the IRC each summer at Estes Park, Colorado, (3) departments of the University offering relevant courses, and (4) many nearby companies in the metropolitan area that were conducting their own training programs.

### **INTERNSHIP EXPERIMENT**

A closer look at the environment revealed that a unique experiment could be conducted. The internship program would cover three main areas: a company study, behavior studies, and training theory and techniques. By

studying his company and what it had done previously to develop dealers, salesmen, and managers, the intern could sharpen his view of the company's background in training which he would have to consider in applying his new knowledge and skills. This study would involve reviewing the functions of the company's departments. Comparisons would be made with studies the personnel department had conducted, and some evaluation of previous efforts to solve the problems found in these studies would also be possible.

At the Industrial Relations Center the intern would study behavior. There he would learn about developing attitude surveys, about feeding back the results of these surveys, and about developing and administering programs designed to solve problems revealed by these surveys. He would also learn how to staff for improved effectiveness and growth of the organization: how to recruit, select, place, and utilize people; how to analyze potential; and how to review performance and plan further development for each individual. Through this program, then, the intern would learn how to spot problems in his company through survey and feedback techniques, how to develop programs to solve them, and how to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs in helping the company reach its full performance potential.

The Center also provided an office as a base for the intern's work at the IRC and at the University.

### **MANAGEMENT COURSES**

To develop his grasp of management, training, and social change, the program was planned so that the intern could take courses in the Graduate School of Business, the Graduate School of Education, and the Department of Sociology, of the University of Chicago. These courses were to be in areas such as organization improvement and management development, innovation and creativity in industry,

personnel management, design and improvement of an adult education program, and social change.

Before beginning the formal internship program, the intern attended the Management Development Seminar in Estes Park, Colorado. This three-week program is designed to develop the talents most needed by managers: skill in communication, leadership, ability to develop subordinates, and skill in decision-making and problem-solving. For the intern, the seminar had a dual purpose: it gave him an overall view of the problems he would meet in his multi-faceted position as leader, trainer, and decision-maker, and it gave the IRC staff a chance to meet the intern, assess his needs, and plan an individualized program for him.

### **THE PROGRAM**

Observations made during the seminar led the staff of the Industrial Relations Center to decide that the most effective internship program would: (1) allow the intern to concentrate on a full complement of courses at the University of Chicago and attend seminars at the Industrial Relations Center; (2) supplement coursework with visits to other companies for observation of training programs in action; and (3) permit the intern to gradually assume his responsibilities as training manager for his company.

Each of these three steps covered a three-month period. In the first period, full-time coursework enabled the intern to withdraw completely from his past activities in the marketing department, obtain a clear view of his career to date, and concentrate fully on a return to the classroom.

During the second period, the intern took additional coursework but also obtained a better grasp of what he had learned by observing other training programs.

During the third period, the intern was to relate the knowledge and experience of the internship to the practical

aspects of his work and to his new job responsibilities.

In evaluating a program specifically designed to meet the needs of a particular man and his company while providing sufficient flexibility to take into account individual differences, the reactions of the intern in the initial experiment and his suggestions on the basis of his experiences are important to the Center's plans for future similar programs.

The three-week Management Development Seminar at the beginning of his internship provided an effective introduction to his job responsibilities, through its stress on communication, leadership styles, and decision-making. He felt he learned how to determine which leadership style was best in a particular situation. He became more aware of the differences among people; he became more skillful in communicating with them. The man felt that the seminar and its timing — just at the beginning of the internship program — gave him a unified conception of the problems he would be dealing with in management for personnel development.

#### CLASSROOM "SHOCK"

One of the major difficulties encountered in mid-career education is dealing with the "shock" of returning to the classroom. At first, the intern's courses placed a heavy strain on him at a time when he was adapting from sales management to studying. Three courses in the first three months were a heavy load when he had to renew his study skills of twenty years ago, but this proved to be most successful. Total immersion in new responsibilities away from the office enabled the intern to concentrate on learning new ways of thinking and on assessing his career to date.

This pattern of total immersion, continued study, and gradual assumption of his new job responsibilities enabled the intern to derive the greatest benefit from the program. The environment of

the internship supported the learning process by reducing anxiety. Since the intern and his family lived within commuting distance of the IRC, worry about his family's welfare was eliminated. Anxiety was further lessened by the intern's having an office at the University. The office enabled him to arrange and organize his time for study and class preparation; he could think of the internship program as another kind of job. Also, he had contact with the personnel of the IRC who gave him the support he needed and helped him with problems that might otherwise have frustrated him. His only frustration, in fact, was that he felt unable to fully exploit these resources in the early part of his internship. In the future, the IRC plans to give the intern a more detailed introduction to the library, the staff, and the departments of the IRC to ensure more effective communication.

One of the values of the overall program was its structured yet flexible design. The intern suggested even greater structure, such as setting up definite appointments for visiting various companies: he had difficulty fitting these into his busy schedule.

#### INDUSTRY VISITS

The visits to the training departments of other companies were successful in that they illustrated practical application of theoretical knowledge presented in his courses. It was the IRC's intention that he see a variety of training programs to learn there is no one right way to design a program that applies to all industries. The training program must be created especially for the needs of the specific company, not altered from another company's existing program.

When the intern spoke to people in charge of training programs, he found some reluctance and even suspicion at first. But after he explained his purpose and his interest, many of the training and development specialists talked to him quite openly. Although

they tended to play down their failures and emphasize their successes, they generally gave him a full and honest picture of the problems involved in their programs and organizations. The intern was puzzled when he found that companies with problems similar to his own were using different approaches. He came to realize that in the development area, as in other areas of management, a manager has to consider alternative approaches, accept change, make decisions based on incomplete information, and admit that developing people requires a high degree of flexibility.

The intern was less interested in the theoretical aspects of his course-work at the University except when there was some readily apparent practical application to his own work. Faced with the immediate tasks of his new position, he was eager to apply what he had learned. The timing and choice of his courses were successful; for example, the initial psychology courses gave him a better understanding of the behavioral aspects of training. Most useful, he felt, was the course on the development of an adult education program.

#### RETURN TO THE JOB

During the last three months of the internship, the man gained confidence in the applicability of his new knowledge while he gradually assumed his new duties. This gradual return to his job may have lessened the inevitable frustration of a new job which was, by virtue of its newness in the company, not well defined.

In designing other such programs, it should be recognized that the gradual transition from one type of activity to another could be a problem for individuals who do not work near a university. In such cases, it would be helpful to arrange for the individual to return periodically to his headquarters, assuming that his academic schedule could be arranged to accommodate this commuting.

In the future, we feel, an ongoing edu-

cational program will become more and more necessary to offset the threat of rapid obsolescence within an organization. Rather than expect each individual to make major sacrifices to provide himself with continuing education, a company must plan a program for selected people, such as the man involved in this experience. It is usually about midpoint in a man's career that he begins to assume major responsibilities. It would be of value to both the man and his company if, before becoming too involved in those major responsibilities, he could be provided with a chance for further education. The concept of a sabbatical leave, as it

is used by universities, could also be used by industry. As an alternative, vacation leaves could be accumulated over a period of years and used for a return to school for at least one quarter.

#### MUTUAL EFFORT

The reeducation process cannot be haphazard but should be at once structured and flexible. How successful, then, was the IRC in creating an environment for a constructive internship? To a man in the middle of his career, the internship provided time out to evaluate his past, analyze the responsibilities of his new job, and pre-

pare himself for them by learning concepts and practices of education, training, and social change. The process remained integral to his company career and its specific nature was geared to the progress of his own company: he both kept in contact with and eventually was an integral part of its continued development.

The American Oil Company played a large part in making the initial internship effective. The company took the enlightened view that a man should be developed for a new job and, in this way, contributed to the fields of education for industry and social science in general.

### LABOR DEPARTMENT CLARIFIES WORK CERTIFICATIONS FOR ALIENS

The U. S. Department of Labor recently listed exemptions in the regulations barring aliens from certain employment in the U. S.

Under the Immigration and Nationality Act, aliens who wish to emigrate to the U. S. to work and who are not admissible under preferences for family relatives or refugees, must obtain a labor certification from the Department of Labor.

New Labor Department regulations, which became effective in October, state that certifications will not be issued for the employment of an alien if his prospective employer had hired an alien over the past three years in violation of the alien's non-immigrant status.

There are exemptions to this rule. The regulation restriction does not apply to employers who during the last three years hired non-immigrant aliens who had:

- been granted the privilege of voluntary departure from the U. S.;
- established that he is unable or unwilling to return to his country or residence on account of race, or political opinion, and is being per-

mitted by the Immigration and Naturalization Service to remain in the U. S.;

--filed an application for adjustment of status or suspension of deportation;

--become the beneficiary of an approved petition for a preference status and is being permitted by the Immigration and Naturalization Service to remain in the U. S.;

--been granted a stay of departure pending disposition of legislation introduced on his behalf, and who had

--been given written permission by the Immigration and Naturalization Service to work.

The explanation also points out that the word "non-immigrant" in the regulation does not apply to aliens in the U. S. on parole status or as conditional entrants. Other special circumstances may exist in individual cases where the effect of employment on a non-immigrant's status is doubtful. In such cases, prospective employers should contact the Immigration and Naturalization Service for clarification of the individual's status.