

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ODIORNE ON "SMUGGLED" TAPE RECORDERS

Dear Sir:

Not long ago I was approached by a manager in an airport. "I want you to know how much I enjoyed your debate with Professor X from California" he enthused. I was puzzled. While it is true that I have debated almost everybody on one side or another of any known topic at some time, I had never heard of my alleged opponent.

"It wasn't really a live debate," the man explained. "Our training director smuggled a tape recorder into several meetings where you spoke and where he spoke and then spliced them together." I shudder to think of the result.

This incident highlights a problem which every speaker, trainer, and sponsor of management programs should face up to squarely. After a staff meeting at the Bureau of Industrial Relations, we adopted the attached policy statement (see box below) which will be included in every notebook at seminars and courses.

We recommend this strongly to trainers, program planners and executive developers as well as to speakers.

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OTHER ASPECTS ON ZELIKOFF

Dear Sir:

Dr. Zelikoff's article providing quantification to the problem of engineering obsolescence is needed and appropriate ("On the Obsolescence and Retraining of Engineering Personnel," May, 1969).

The author may misinterpret the reasons why a substantial percentage of B.S. and M.S. degree engineers strongly favor graduate work in industrial management. This is most likely not due to their belief in their own obsolescence, but rather to their accurate view of the reward structure of the organizations in which they work. Most engineering organizations do not provide a means for the engineer to obtain promotions and salary increases while remaining in engineering that are commensurate with what he would obtain if he were to leave engineering and become a manager. The detrimental effects of this situation can be overcome by providing parallel ladders of advancement in the engineering and managerial specialties. In addition to making it advantageous to remain an engineer, this procedure may also provide an incentive to the engineer to try to stay up-to-date and avoid obsolescence, particularly if the promotion and pay scheme specifically includes a measure, such as the author suggests, of the current relevance of the engineer's knowledge. From the standpoint of the organization this has dual advantages in that it makes staying current profitable to the engineer, thus in-

A Word About Tape Recorders in BIR Seminars and Courses

Because of the increased availability of low-cost, high-fidelity tape recorders, many people request permission to record speeches, talks and sessions. Often the speakers deliver materials which are copyrighted, for which they previously have signed commercial or other taping agreements which does not permit further public re-

production of their material. Because of this, it is Bureau policy that the following governs use of tape recorders in sessions:

Recordings of speeches may be made only with the knowledge of the speaker, and by his permission. They may be made only for the private use of the seminar attendee and may not be reproduced for general use or in company training sessions without specific permission of the speaker.

creasing the likelihood of occurrence, and it also avoids the problem of promoting a good engineer into management, thereby losing a good engineer and gaining a poor manager.

The author proposes three weeks per year as a substitute for Forrester's suggestion of 25% study. This seems quite unrealistic. Perhaps a better compromise is 10%. Since the graduate seems to lose about 10% per year in the early period following graduation, this would seem a reasonable proposal. It would also fit into the present five-week summer sessions available at many universities. The need which the author points out for devising special courses for these periods must not be understated.

Dr. Zelikoff makes little use of what would be expected to be stressed in a training journal. The key to effectively

keeping people up-to-date is to enhance motivation in this direction. If you can make it profitable in some way to stay up-to-date, the chances of persons doing so will increase substantially. The recommendations on government subsidies and technical society films, etc., make it feasible to keep up and lessen the cost to the organization. While this is important, it is minor in comparison to the need to provide the engineer with an incentive to keep up. Unless the motivation is present, training courses and required attendance are of little real value; when the motivation is present, the demand for training will make itself known.

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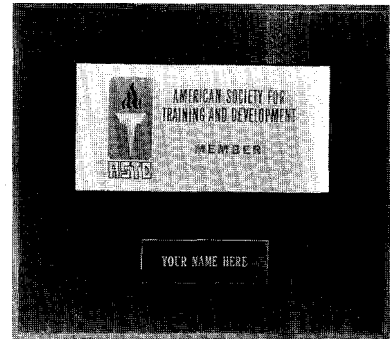


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