

# The Trainer As An Administrator

Thomas W. Gill

**T**he administrator tries to make a mesh of things. He tries to catch all the elements of an organization in a net; and nets, we know, were invented by Loki, the Norse God of Evil, maker of mischief and creator of discord.

Loki got his comeuppance, of course. He was chained to a rock and a serpent dripped venom on his face. His wife caught the venom in a cup, but every time she emptied the cup, the venom splashed into his eyes and mouth and ran down his nose.

Many people in business and government feel that Loki got just what he deserved. They look upon administrators, and this includes training administrators, as parasites who fatten on an organization without contributing anything to it. They coordinate but they do not create. They manipulate. They scheme. They snare people in a net of policies and procedures. They perpetuate an outfit to enhance

their own position rather than to make a product or provide a service. In short, they are very dispensable.

This is not all buncombe. Administrators do manipulate and scheme. They do tend to perpetuate an organization regardless of its original mission and function, but this is not necessarily bad.

A recent example is the March of Dimes. This organization was founded to fight polio; and when polio was whipped, it changed its mission. It now fights arthritis and birth defects. The people who managed it probably decided to perpetuate it out of mixed motives. There was undoubtedly an honest concern for others, an altruistic desire to help, mixed with a very human desire to keep one's job.

Administrators are also accused of joining an organization because it offers career opportunities and not because they are very enthusiastic about its mission or the product or service

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it provides. And this, too, is not necessarily bad.

The early Christian Church is a good example. When it became obvious to some of the bright young administrators of ancient Rome that the empire was dying, they moved to the Church. Some of them undoubtedly had only a perfunctory interest in the mysteries of the Christian faith, but they were perceptive and the Church offered them an outlet for their ambition and energy. Nor is it cynical to say that the best of them made as great a contribution to Christianity as some of our more zealous saints.

### The Trainer's Interest

And now the training officer has become a training administrator, and his primary interest is the training office. He is more interested in its growth and efficiency than in actually teaching the latest in supervisory development or electronic wizardry. It is through the organization that he can do things, and it is only rarely that he will teach himself. Like college presidents and high school principals, he will direct and coordinate the efforts of those who do. Nor will he be apprehensive if the mission of the entire organization changes; he will adapt the training office to the change.

What, then, does the training administrator actually do? Well, he gets—or tries to get—enough money to run an adequate program. That's worth repeating. He tries to get enough money to run a better than adequate program, for he knows that the health of the entire organization as well as that of the training office—and his job—depend on it. However, his business is not to see how *much* money he can spend; he knows it is not the amount of money spent on training that is significant, but how it is spent. A thousand dollars' worth of effective training can result in more production

and profit than one hundred thousand dollars' worth of ineffective training. The training administrator tries to show that his expenditures for training result in a net gain, that each dollar spent on training results in increased dollars in production or profit. Admittedly, this is difficult; but it is imperative that the training administrator adhere to the policy of "need to know" rather than "nice to go." He must realize that no organization, including a training office, can survive unless it meets a real need.

### Integrated Functions

He tries to assist the operating people in determining their training needs; and he scouts around for the most appropriate methods and the best instructors to meet them. Determining training needs and evaluating the results of training are part of the same process and both are obviously integrated into the budget cycle. The training administrator tries to make all three mesh smoothly.

He becomes deeply involved in career development and helps in the establishment of career plans based on occupational fields. It is obvious that a research chemist requires a different training plan and has different training needs than an apprentice machinist. Too, he can anticipate and project training needs much better within a structured system. The business of identifying and meeting development needs is a supervisory-individual process, but it is best done within the context of systematic organizational planning. The needs of the organization come first.

He meshes training with employment. If there is to be considerable academic training, it should be a quality recruitment program; and if the training is to be of an excruciatingly routine nature, recruitment should probably be confined to the intellec-

tually underprivileged. The training administrator and the employment office should work closely together.

### Administer Policy

He helps establish the necessary procedures to carry out the training policies of the organization. The policies are set by top management, of course, but the training administrator provides the necessary staff work to ensure that the best possible alternatives are presented to the policy makers. He sees that all procedures are written and widely disseminated.

He is open to new ideas and should categorically reject the notion that nothing can be done for the first time. He should be an optimist by nature and should be at least moderately willing to take risks.

He should have the courage to withhold promotions and to shift people on his staff, even against their wishes. This is often the thing most needed

and the most difficult to do.

### Must Teach

But the most important thing he does, paradoxically, is teach. As mentioned above, he will seldom teach regular classes, but he will constantly be teaching by example. What other people do because of his presence becomes most important.

He should, therefore, spread his net over the organization with subtle care and pedagogic patience. If he doesn't, he may spend an eternity under a steady drizzle of venom. He should try to instill in supervisors and managers a need for an acceptance of training and a desire to help in identifying and meeting training and development needs. With a favorable climate for training, his job is a welcome challenge; with a hostile or even indifferent climate, it becomes a frustrating chore.

## Film Aids Bank Management Training

Lack of managerial training for succession is a major cause of bank mergers, maintains Merlin C. Landberg, Assistant Vice President and Director of Personnel here at First Bank Stock Corporation, Minneapolis, Minn.

Landberg points out that studies made by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation show that 63 per cent of mergers result from either poor or improperly planned management succession or incompetent management which, he comments, is "another way of saying the same thing."

A bank holding company which owns and operates 87 banks with

combined assets of \$2.6 billion in the 9th Federal Reserve District, First Bank Stock Corporation recently conducted a training-oriented program for its 84 top management and 500 middle management men.

Built around a 28-minute soundfilm, "Manager Wanted," produced by Roundtable Productions, Inc., Beverly Hills, California, the program's results were uniformly good in terms of increased realization and acceptance of the responsibility for managerial training for succession, according to Landberg.