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and hope that in the future we will have more.**

Training
Non-Trainers
For Training

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Many training directors today face a sad but undeniable truth: the demand for training far exceeds the resources available to meet that demand. As a consequence, training is often conducted by trying to maximize the constraints of the given situation. In short, we make do with what we now have and hope that in the future we will have more.

One constraint in many organizations is the size of the training staff. If this constraint exists in an organization with multiple locations, spread across a wide geographic area, the problems are compounded. Either a small cadre of trainers "ride the circuit" meeting the training needs of the various locations, or talent at these locations is recruited to conduct the training.

Trade-offs are present in both options. In the former we are likely to have confidence in our trainers but are also likely to witness fatigue, stress and profession-al burn-out. In the latter option we have rested trainers but with questionable training skills.

In an attempt to bridge the trade-offs presented by both options, many organizations today, especially those utilizing modular training programs, select non-professional trainers at various sites and provide them with training designed to improve their training skills. In this article we present a case analysis of one such program. The analysis is useful for three reasons:

1) As the demand for training exceeds the supply of trainers, an increasing number of non-professional trainers will be selected. We must develop theories and strategies for training them.

2) Modular training packages appear to be an increasingly attractive method for meeting training needs. Unfortunately, most of these packages require an individual to guide participants through the materials. These individuals are usually recruited from the ranks of the non-professional trainer. We must discover how to train them to use modular materials.

3) The problems presented in the case are in one sense, generic, and thus applicable to any organization confronted with training the non-professional trainer.

The Case — A large regional diary marketing cooperative contracted independent consultants to design and construct a modular supervisory training program. The program was to meet the following criteria:

1) It had to be industry specific.

2) It had to be an introductory program of supervisory skills.

3) It had to have a high interest (entertainment) value for supervisors.

4) It had to contain three components: a slide-tape presentation, participant materials and trainer materials.

5) It had to incorporate both cognitive and behavioral objectives.

6) It had to be adaptable to the training skills of non-professional trainers spread across a broad geographic area.

Hence, the case involved two problems. One was the construction of the materials themselves;

the second was training the non-professional in how to use the materials. As indicated earlier, our focus is on the second problem.[1]

Training the Trainers: The Guiding Assumptions

As McGregor suggests,[2] the underlying assumptions of our actions must be clearly articulated if we are to ever understand what we do and why we do it. This is equally as true for management style as it is for designing a training program. What specific assumptions guided our design? Prior to conducting the training a series of meetings with the corporate human resources staff resulted in deducing the following assumptions:

1. *The training program will only work if it has top-down support.* Trainers in the field must be convinced that their managers and the corporate staff support them and believe in them.

2. *The non-professional trainer is likely to feel nervous, insecure and apprehensive about being selected as a trainer.* Moreover, rather than a reflection of paranoia, these feelings are rational and justified.

3. *The trainer can only conduct the training if he or she believes in the content and spirit of the training modules.* The nervousness and insecurity of the non-professional is likely to be compounded if the content of the training contradicts the trainer's value system or code of ethics.

4. *The non-professional trainer is likely to feel worried about failing at something which he/she was not hired to do in the first place.* This fear will be magnified if progression in the career path is dependent on success in the training session.

5. *The non-professional trainer will be looking for skills and solutions to problems, not theories about training.* Even though the non-professional trainer may place value in these theories of training, how to train is the critical issue.

These five assumptions, developed by the corporate human resources staff, served as a basis for the design of the "Train the Trainer Program." The design was con-

structed in three stages. Each of these stages will be discussed in turn.

Stage I.

During this stage the philosophy of the training program, its intended objectives and examples of modules themselves were presented to members of the corporate staff and to general managers of the operating divisions.

During these presentations questions were asked and management commitment was solicited. The purpose of these sessions was to bring assumption No. 1 to the fore, emphasizing that the non-professional trainer will need all the moral and physical support that upper management could provide. Without such support the modules might just sit on a shelf. The success of Stage I is exemplified by the fact that the CEO of the cooperative, after observing the module on "Effective Listening," said that he could benefit from training as much as any supervisor in the cooperative.

Stage II.

During this stage the trainees were selected to lead the training sessions in their home plants and facilities. The group, ranging in age from 23 to 65 and approximately equally divided between males and females, was responsible for supervising the personnel function at their respective locations.

Although most had conducted some training in their divisions, such experience was limited to safety meetings and orientation sessions. None of the group members had ever conducted a modular program or had ever received formal instruction in the theory and practice of training.

Two weeks prior to the training program each participant received a questionnaire in the mail. The major purposes of the questionnaire were to determine the expectations of the group and to assess whether the assumptions of the corporate staff were accurate. Responses to the questionnaire confirmed the assumptions. Most trainees questioned their ability to lead a supervisory training session, were concerned about the expectations upper management had

Figure 1.
THEORETICAL RATIONALE OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM

CONCERNS OF NON-PROFESSIONAL TRAINER

LACK OF CONFIDENCE/ INSECURITY

PERCEPTIONS OF UPPER MANAGEMENT'S EXPECTATIONS

DELIVERY SKILLS

FIT OF PERSONAL STYLE TO MODULAR MATERIALS

ALLEVIATED BY ACHIEVING

TRAINING OBJECTIVES

THE TRAINEES WILL:
1. DEVELOP GROUP DISCUSSION SKILLS . . . ACQUIRE TECHNIQUE FOR ASKING AND ANSWERING QUESTIONS
2. DEVELOP AN AWARENESS OF TOP MANAGEMENT'S SUPPORT
3. OBSERVE MODELS OF HOW THE MODULES COULD BE CONDUCTED
4. CONDUCT A MODULAR TRAINING PROGRAM
5. RECEIVE INDIVIDUAL COACHING AND CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM
6. REDUCE THEIR ANXIETY . . . DEVELOP A SENSE OF COMFORT REGARDING THE FIT BETWEEN THEIR PERSONAL STYLE AND THE MODULAR MATERIALS

of them and stressed their lack of content expertise. Moreover, when asked to list the characteristics of the "ideal trainer" a profile emerged dominated by the adjectives "knowledgeable," "enthusiastic" and "possessing communication ability."

The final question elicited the participants' major concern or apprehension regarding the upcoming training program. Again the previously stated assumptions were confirmed. Most were anxious about the fit between their personal styles and the requirements of the packaged modular materials.

Stage III.

The assumptions stated earlier and the confirming responses to the questionnaire provided a basis for designing a training program that would meet the needs of the modular system while addressing the concerns of the non-professional trainers. This rationale is presented in Figure 1.

As indicated in Figure 1, four major concerns of the non-professional trainer had to be addressed. Moreover, the arrows linking the concerns suggest that they are interactive, affecting and being affected by other concerns.

The purpose of the training session was to alleviate these concerns by meeting the goals of the training itself. Thus, by achieving the goals of the training the major concerns of the non-professional trainer would also be diminished.

Because of the coaching component built into the design and a desire to maintain a low trainer-trainee ratio, the group of 26 was divided into two smaller groups — groups A and B respectively. The training was conducted over a two-day period. While group A went through the training, group B attended a workshop on Affirmative Action and Management Development. At the end of the two-day session groups A and B changed assignments.

Rather than sub-contract professional trainers to conduct the training session, all training for the session was conducted by the consultants who designed the modular system itself.

Although the data suggests the flow and content of the workshop, it fails to capture the climate and training environment consciously strived for by the workshop designers. Given the concerns of the non-professional trainers (Figure 1), a supportive climate, one bordering on the therapeutic was viewed as necessary for achieving the training objectives.

The workshop sessions were de-signed to minimize didactic lecturing, utilizing in its place discussion and dialogue. In so doing the workshop leaders were consciously trying to provide models of the behaviors necessary for conducting the modules themselves.

The leaders also stressed the differences among their own training styles as the sessions progressed. By drawing comparisons and contrasts among the training styles, trainees were able to recognize that the goal of effective training can be achieved through a variety of individual styles and techniques. This recognition is especially important for the non-professional who assumes that training is only effective if it's conducted by a "silver-tongued orator."

Secondly, if the non-professional must conduct a modular training program and feels uncomfortable with his/her personal style, the result is likely to be a "sterile," canned presentation, following the military model of "by the numbers." This model may work with 18-year-old recruits, but it fails miserably with 35-year-old supervisors.

To incorporate spontaneity and comfort trainers must feel relaxed with their own style. Creating a supportive climate, providing be-

havioral models and focusing on the value of individual differences helped participants move toward spontaneity and comfort.

Effectiveness and Implications of the Program

As is the case with any training program, effectiveness is defined in terms of the extent to which training objectives have been met. With this as the ultimate criterion we conclude that the training session was a success.

Only one participant left the program with questions about her ability to lead the modules. The remaining 26 participants concurred that the modules can work, that upper management wants them to work and that they have the ability to make them work. Also, the majority of the participants expressed the views that there is nothing magical about good training and that training is easier than they thought it was prior to the training session.

What does this case teach us about training the non-professional trainer? And more specifically, what does it teach us about training the non-professional trainer who must return home and conduct "packaged" modular training programs? We will answer these questions in two sections: one focusing on the modular materials themselves, the other focusing on training the non-professional.

The major advantage of a modular program is that it is self-contained, providing all the materials needed to achieve the given training objectives. In order to meet this objective, however, designers are confronted with trying to balance the competing demands of control and standardization with the needs, styles and individuality of trainers. And unfortunately, to win at one is to lose at the other.

The approach followed in constructing the modules in the present case was to write the materials for two audiences: *the supervisors who would receive the training* and *the trainers who would conduct it.* On the basis of surveying many of the packaged materials currently on the market it appears as if far greater attention is given to the former group than the latter. Obviously, modules are written for a given target group. However, the trainer "delivers" the material to the target group and unless he or she feels comfortable with the package or method of delivery, the package may arrive damaged.

In short, the instructor notes for a modular program should not be an afterthought, or something simply tacked on to the program. They are essential and must be adapted to the needs of the trainer who is usually inexperienced and probably apprehensive.

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With respect to the train-the-trainer session itself, three important lessons were learned. First, the non-professional trainer will be looking to upper management for support, both physical and moral. We must remember that the non-professional trainer was hired for reasons other than training. To re-define the role and to expect proficiency as a trainer is likely to elicit defensiveness at best and hostility at worst. The non-professional trainer must be convinced that the new role is supported by upper management who also recognize the pressure imposed by the role.

Secondly, the training session was structured according to a set of assumptions later confirmed by the participants themselves. These assumptions underscored the threat and uncertainty generated by the new training assignment. We might speculate that one of the reasons the program was successful is that these assumptions were directly tied to the training objectives themselves.

Finally, designers of similar programs in the future must recognize the importance of providing behavioral models and setting aside enough time for individual counseling and coaching. Hundreds of hours will be devoted to developing the modules. This time may be insignificant if the non-professionals selected to conduct the modules are not given enough time to develop skills and reduce their apprehension.

REFERENCES

1. Readers interested in the content and structure of the modules should contact Ms. Virginia Pattison, Personnel Communications Manager, Dairymen, Inc., 10140 Linn Station Road, Louisville, KY 40223.
2. McGregor, Douglas, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1960.

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