

In Practice

Smoke Gets in Your Hires

Smokers have heard it all before.

From the Surgeon General: smoking causes cancer, heart disease, tuberculosis, emphysema, bronchitis, and low birth weights in newborn children, and cigarette smoke contains carbon monoxide. From friends, lovers, and spouses: smoking causes bad breath, smelly clothes, and scorched upholstery. From office mates and total strangers in public places: smoking causes people to shoot dirty looks and make those little fake coughing sounds designed to induce guilt and convince puffers to stamp out their butts.

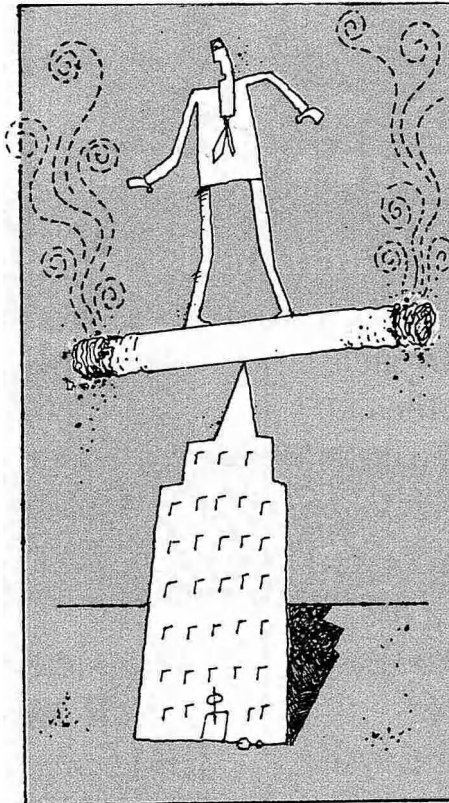
For the unrepentant and unreformed, such phenomena cause the urge to light up another cigarette and wonder what's next. Well, smoke 'em if you got 'em, and listen up. The news is getting worse for the nicotine addicted.

Robert Half International now reports that smoking may be bad not only for your health and social standing, but also for your career.

A recent survey conducted by the financial-services and information-systems recruiting firm indicates that one out of four smokers will be passed over during the hiring process because of the tobacco habit. The survey posed this question to 100 top executives and personnel managers: "If there were two equally qualified candidates for a job—one a smoker and the other a nonsmoker—which one would you hire?"

While 70 percent expressed no preference, a full 25 percent said they would hire the nonsmoker. The remaining 5 percent did not answer.

Even smokers who manage to land jobs now find it difficult to indulge their habits at work, Half reports. Eighty-five percent of the respondents said their facilities now have no-smoking areas. That's up from 51 percent in 1980, when the



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survey was last conducted.

Of companies with no-smoking areas, 15 percent now entirely prohibit smoking on the premises. Nearly 400 U.S. cities and counties have enacted ordinances that ban or limit smoking in public places or on the job.

Max Messmer, chairman of Robert Half International, believes the survey findings reflect social changes and growing economic concerns. "The demands by nonsmokers for a smoke-free environment have clearly influenced companies to restrict or prohibit smoking on their premises," he said. "But concerns about productivity and health-insurance costs are also leading employers to implement new policies and offer new employee benefits that discourage smoking."

Several insurance-industry studies indicate that health-benefit costs are higher for smokers than for nonsmokers and that smokers on aver-

age take more sick days than do nonsmokers.

What can smokers do to increase their chances of getting hired? Short of quitting entirely, they can at least refrain from lighting up during interviews, Robert Half International maintains. The firm reports that 73 percent of employers are unlikely to hire candidates who smoke during job interviews.

Checking Into Hotel Training Facilities

By Brenda McPeak and Steve Vissotzky. McPeak is manager of meetings, exhibits, and travel for Pocahontas Foods U.S.A. in Richmond, Virginia. Vissotzky is the general manager of the Hyatt Richmond hotel.

All of a sudden things are getting a little out of hand. What began as a simple two-hour class has blossomed into a two-day workshop, drawing three dozen participants from all over the country. A quick glance at your 150-square-foot training room and you know you need to make alternative arrangements.

You know instructional design inside and out, but you've never had to plan a large meeting before. Where should you turn for assistance? Check into one of your area's major hotels. Chances are good that the people there can help you find a meeting facility that meets your training needs.

But be careful. Before you contract for meeting space, take a few minutes to determine just what those training needs are. When evaluating prospective meeting sites, put yourself in the place of the people who will attend your session. By keeping their comfort and convenience in mind, you can make sure your attendees spend their time learning instead of wishing they were somewhere else.

To find an appropriate meeting facility, find the answers to these questions.

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■ **Is the meeting room the right size?** Many hotels will try to book their largest spaces first. An enormous ballroom may be just fine if your participants number in the hundreds, but for smaller groups, look for correspondingly smaller rooms. Meeting space must be big enough to comfortably accommodate everyone, but not so large that it seems impersonal or distracting.

Some hotels can subdivide ballrooms into more intimate spaces by pulling out temporary partitions. Often that's your only option, but be aware that noise coming from the other side of the partition can disrupt meetings held in divided rooms.

■ **Will the room's atmosphere contribute to a successful meeting?** Even the best-planned sessions can fail if unpleasant surroundings make participants feel trapped and uncomfortable. Try to book space that seems bright and cheerful, with windows and comfortable, attractive furniture. Make sure the room is adequately ventilated, and has com-

plete climate control.

■ **Does the hotel have a convenient and well-planned break area near your meeting room?** Remember that meeting breaks serve two purposes. They provide a chance for informal discussions between participants, but they also give everyone time to relax and recharge for the rest of the day's activities.

To determine whether or not a hotel can handle your requirements, visit the hotel while another group is meeting and observe a break. Make sure the food and drink are fresh, and look for professional service from the catering staff. Just as important, see if the participants are enjoying themselves.

While you're in the break area, check the locations of restrooms and public telephones. They should be nearby.

■ **Is the hotel well equipped for business travelers?** If your meeting will run for more than one day, be sure the hotel's guest rooms have been designed with meeting attend-

ees in mind. Rooms should be larger than average, and have a comfortable work area with a desk and bright lighting.

To make it as easy as possible for participants to check in, see if the hotel will allow preregistration. That way, you can simply include a room key in the package of meeting materials you provide when attendees sign in at your session.

Since many of your participants may need to attend to home-office matters while they attend your session, make sure the hotel you select has a business center. Look for photocopiers, facsimile machines, and typing services.

Finally, consider participants' leisure habits when you choose a meeting hotel. Exercise facilities, tennis courts, jogging trails, and a swimming pool may help people relax after the long training day. Several on-site restaurants and lounges will offer a chance to enjoy variety without leaving the hotel.

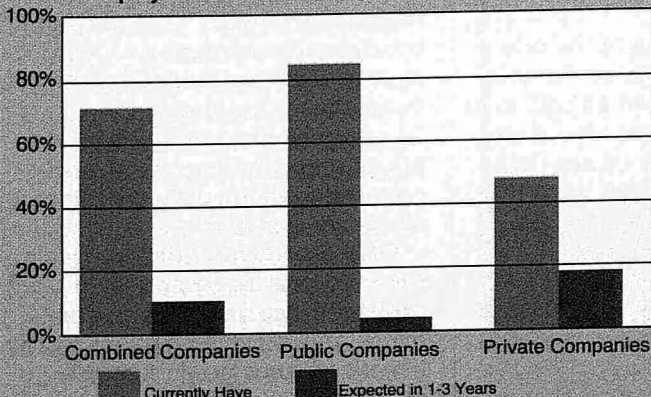
Equipped with the answers to

NATIONAL HRD EXECUTIVE SURVEY

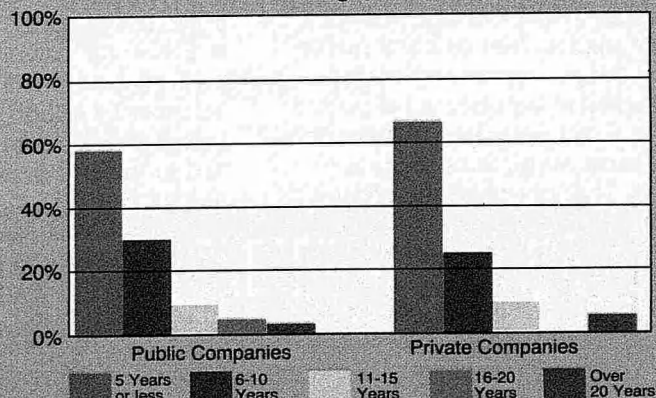
Employee Involvement's Recent Take-Off

Seven of 10 companies responding to the American Society for Training and Development's National HRD Executive Survey say they have formal employee-involvement programs or strategies. Although publicly traded companies outpace private firms on the E.I. front, the privateers are rapidly gaining ground. The survey defined employee involvement as a business strategy that uses participative-management principles to solicit from all employees advice on how companies can better solve problems and make organizational decisions.

Employee-Involvement Programs: Current & Projected



Years Formal Programs Have Operated



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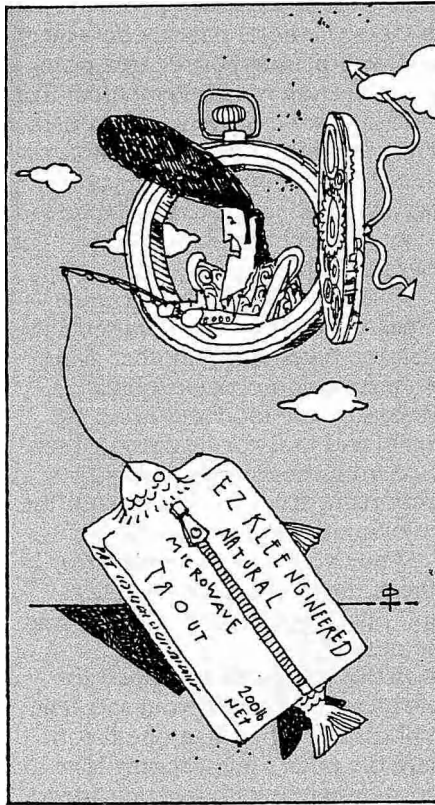
these questions, you will be well on your way to selecting a meeting site that keeps participants comfortable and attentive. And that sets the tone for a productive and successful training meeting.

Undercapitalized Japanese Elvis-Clones To Work 32-Hour Weeks

Every once in a while the World Future Society weighs in with a series of predictions on what life will be like in the Brave New World. The latest crop is somewhat disappointing.

Considering the wealth of possibilities it has to work with—anything and everything that hasn't happened yet—you would think the WFS forecasts might display a flair for the adventurous. Couldn't WFS analysts spread the word that the trend toward globalization will one day lead to worldwide harmony so intense that no one will need armies, courts, or stress-management workshops? That all people will become so fit and healthy that Richard Simmons will find himself off cable TV and looking for work? That advanced technology will progress to the point that an amateur photographer will be able to snap pictures clear enough to show that Elvis is indeed alive and dining well in Kalamazoo?

Sadly, few of the World Future Society's most recent prognostications herald the advent of such a utopian world. Oh sure, the society's analysts hint of many marvelous things—genetic research designed to produce a 100-pound trout looks promising, for example—but most predictions seem rather staid. That's because the group's experts tend to use such respectable tools as econometric projections and demographic trend lines to predict the future. No horoscope scanners or crystal-ball gazers here; the WFS forecasters include professors, attorneys, and scientists.



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Even so, a few of their predictions are at least interesting, especially those concerning the business world. To wit:

■ Japan's soaring economy, widely envied today, will shortly begin a nose dive, according to World Future Society authorities. During the nineties, they say, Japan will suffer a period of economic turmoil and instability so severe that the nation is unlikely to regain its current powerhouse status.

■ Before the dawning of the next century, the United States will gain between \$4 trillion and \$5 trillion in capital assets, a sum growth closely tied to the emergence of new technology. But WFS analysts warn that the wealth may become concentrated in just a few corporations. Unless new financing systems emerge at the same time, small businesses will find credit even tighter than it is now.

■ Within six years, the Society

predicts, most adults will work a 32-hour week. Time formerly spent on the job will instead be devoted to preparing for new careers. Students, on the other hand, will spend more time in the classroom.

To find out more about what tomorrow will bring, contact the World Future Society, 4916 St. Elmo Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20814-5089.

Work, Family, and Labor Unions

Parental leave, elder care and child care, and flexible work schedules are among the issues that may dominate the American organized labor agenda in the 1990s, according to the Bureau of National Affairs.

A BNA report states that many unions—hit hard in recent years by declining memberships and contract concessions—are working both at the bargaining table and in political circles to secure benefits that will help members balance work and family responsibilities, especially for the growing number of women in their ranks.

"It's not just how much money we can squeeze out of [management] anymore," Howard Evans, president of an American Postal Workers Union local, told BNA researchers. "A lot of our members are interested in the more intangible benefits."

Nonetheless, the report maintains that unions may have a hard time negotiating popular work-and-family benefits. After surveying 250 employers, BNA concluded that, although many employers have adopted parental-leave policies, corporate sentiment remains strongly opposed to such costly programs as child-care assistance.

Only 8 percent of the companies surveyed provide some sort of child-care assistance under union contracts. Another 8 percent expect the benefit to come up during 1990 negotiations. In contrast, almost 75

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percent of the companies surveyed operate under collective-bargaining agreements that provide maternity leave, while 12 percent have paternity-leave provisions.

Despite low figures on some fronts, BNA data indicate that unions are making progress in securing work-and-family benefits. A similar survey conducted last year found that 67 percent of agreements provided maternity leave, with 4 percent mandating child-care assistance.

To compensate for management resistance to collective-bargaining concessions, many unions have begun addressing work-and-family matters internally. Because this issue is relatively new—especially for the older males who continue to steer much of organized labor—several unions now sponsor conferences and seminars designed to help their representatives understand members' needs and learn how to bargain for family benefits, the report states.

In addition, unions increasingly give rank-and-file members information about the issue. "A lot of times, members have no idea they can even bargain" for work-and-family benefits, said Sandy Pope, executive director of the Coalition of Labor Union Women. They think collective bargaining is limited to wages and health benefits, Pope explained.

Several unions have gone beyond educational programs in an effort to provide child day-care benefits. The BNA report, titled *Work and Families and Unions: Labor's Agenda for the 1990s*, cites five cases in which unions provided the impetus for more enlightened practices.

The first union-operated day-care center, for example, was established in Grand Junction, Colorado, by the United Food and Commercial Workers. The Syracuse, New York, local of the American Postal Workers Union organized a 24-hour on-site day-care center.

Also in New York, the state and the Civil Service Employees Associa-

tion recently established the nation's largest child-care network. In Santa Clara, California, the Service Employees International Union helped

save a school from closing by opening a before- and after-school day-care center.

In some cases, the issue of day

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care has even caused union organizing activity. In a celebrated case, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees organized nonprofessional workers at Harvard University over the lack of affordable child care in the Boston area.

The BNA report concludes that work-and-family benefits will continue to be a galvanizing force within organized labor in the nineties, and that the issue may even herald an opportunity to soften the traditionally adversarial nature of labor/management relationships.

To order copies of *Work and Families and Unions: Labor's Agenda for the 1990s*, contact the Bureau of National Affairs Customer Service Center at 9435 Key West Avenue, Rockville, MD 20850; 800/372-1033. The report costs \$35.

Random Stats

Long hours, getting longer

At least one out of five managers and executives performs more than one job according to the outplacement firm Challenger Gray & Christmas. Staff cutbacks and restructuring are likely to force more employees to double up in similar fashion in coming years.

As a result, Challenger Gray predicts, several trends will emerge. On a positive note, white-collar employees will find themselves increasingly aware of health and fitness issues. On the down side, more companies will scrap the time clock, encouraging employees to adopt an open-ended schedule, burning the midnight oil until their work is done.

The move toward multiple mana-

gerial and executive responsibilities poses new problems for Challenger Gray & Christmas. The company says it is worried it may have trouble placing managers and executives who insist on nine-to-five work days.

Sales trainers take note

Personal computers have become indispensable to selling, according to Evergreen Ventures Corporation, which recently polled salespeople, sales managers, and small-business owners in an effort to define how plugged in the sales profession is.

People who sell things for a living told the firm that they use computers to organize their operations, track their time, control sales leads and orders, streamline repetitive tasks, and—our favorite—present a more professional image.

The survey reports that 58 percent of PC users own their equipment, most likely desktop IBM or Compaq machines. Surprisingly, only 16 percent use laptop computers.

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Trainees Confused? Check Your Chunks

By Rick Fenwick and Claudia Davis. Fenwick is the administrator of employee involvement at General Motors' Fisher Guide Division North Anderson Training Center in Anderson, Indiana. Davis also works in employee involvement at that facility.

The interpersonal-skills class has begun beautifully. All the trainees are present, name tags are on, and introductions have been made. Comfortable and receptive, the participants seem as eager to learn as the trainers are to teach.

But an hour into the session, everyone feels the mood changing. Now the participants seem resistant and confused, while the trainers grow frustrated. What's wrong?

Many factors can contribute to this sort of problem, but one reason

may have to do with what we call the "chunk size" of the material being presented. When trainers fail to determine which chunk size best suits trainees' learning styles, the resulting mismatch can interfere with effective training transfer.

As we define it, there are two levels of chunk size: large chunk and small chunk. Training delivered in large chunks emphasizes analytical, intuitive, and abstract concepts, or the overall meaning of an entire task. Small-chunk training focuses on concrete experience—the detailed, hands-on, step-by-step components of a task.

If trainers prefer one size, while trainees favor the other, it's easy to understand how a session might dissolve into confusion and frustration.

To avoid that, trainers should be sure to consider both chunk sizes when they present their material. Appeal to only large chunk learners, and trainers will lose those who process information better in small chunks. The opposite is also true. Without balance between the two styles, some trainees will miss some of the material.

And that, of course, means that some part of the training session won't produce the desired outcome—on-the-job behavioral change.

Sometimes a trainer will perceive one trainee as a "problem student" simply because he or she prefers one chunk size over the other. By observing trainees, monitoring their responses during the early part of the session, and then finding an appropriate blend of the concrete and the abstract, a trainer can help ensure a successful learning experience for all participants.

"In Practice" is edited and written by John Wilcox. Send items of interest to In Practice, Training & Development Journal, 1630 Duke Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.



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