

Training & Development Journal

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Issues

Tell Us What You Think

We assume that it's Tuesday, November 8. You're sipping your morning coffee from a mug that reads "HRD for Me," reading the newly arrived *Journal*, and suddenly you say, "Gee, it's morning in America, and I've got to exercise one of my democratic freedoms." Certainly, you've given the election some thought. In your opinion, which candidate, Bush or the Duke, would do the best by HRD? And for whom are you going to vote and why?

Now it's November 9, and the morning paper trumpets the election result. Whether you are elated, disappointed, or indifferent, tell us, from an HRD perspective, what issues this new president should address. What legislation should he push? Should he create new programs or revamp old ones? What should be on both his short- and his long-range HRD agendas?

We'd like to hear your opinion. Send your letters to "Issues," *Training & Development Journal*, 1630 Duke Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.

the service is nevertheless good! From there the article goes on for another 12 paragraphs with nary a mention of operator service and ends up with an affirmation that computerized monitoring can be a plus for employer and employee if it is properly utilized.

I assert that AT&T operator service is efficient, courteous, and responsive to the customer. By cute innuendo, the article suggests that this is not so, but offers no data to support its playing with the reputation of my company. Instead of adding to the length of this letter with AT&T data which is carefully tracked to ensure that we are meeting customer needs, I suggest that each reader apply the acid test of his or her own experience to decide whether my contention is fair, and that the article is guilty of a cheap shot.

Moreover, ASTD is in the vanguard of efforts to assist American business to become more competitive through initiatives which improve productivity. If our own journal indulges in this type of sniping, how will that help to build a coalition of industrial support for ASTD programs?

D.K. Conover
AT&T
Hopewell, NJ

(Editor's note: We apologize for the unintentional slight to AT&T and its customer service efforts.)

Getting Our Lines Crossed

The lead item in the "In Practice" column in the August 1988 issue is offensive, inaccurate, and contrary to ASTD's encouragement of a more competitive American economy.

A slur to AT&T ("Thank You For Using AT&(Click) . . .") is followed by two short paragraphs of childish rhetoric which convey two thoughts: one, that operator efficiency has been pushed to the detriment of good service; and two, that

Choosing the Right Outplacement Service

Authors Stephen L. Guinn ("Outplacement Programs: Separating Myth from Reality," August 1988) and Donald R. Simon ("Outplacement: Meeting Needs, Matching Services," same issue) present valid justification for the use of outplacement services and its emergence as a staple of the total corporate benefits package. They stop

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Issues

short, however, in providing sufficient guidance to the purchaser in evaluating competent, professional services.

In virtually every state the provision of outplacement services is unregulated. Consequently, it becomes incumbent on the user of outplacement to be able to evaluate the differences between providers of quality service and those who simply want to make a fast buck. While Simon suggests a number of questions to ask potential providers, neither author gets at the underlying training of the individual counselors.

True outplacement counseling requires a number of skills that are learned only through a combination of education and on-the-job training. These skills potentially include grief, career, motivational, family, mental health, and substance abuse counseling. For the majority of individuals in business, these skills can be learned only through graduate education in counseling, social work, psychology, or related courses. Unfortunately, there continues to be a rash of outplacement service providers whose only qualifications are to have received outplacement counseling themselves. While these individuals may be well meaning, they are usually not qualified to provide the range of services that many people require.

While support material and instructional content are important, the qualifications of the counselors and their ability to provide meaningful counseling are the primary ingredients that determine success or failure. The American Association of Counseling and Development and the associated National Board of Certified Counselors and National Board of Certified Career Counselors are organizations that are providing standardization of training and qualifications for its members. All National Certified Counselors are required to meet minimum educational requirements, to have participated in supervised training

experiences, to pass a written exam, and to obtain continuing education in their career field. The training that counselors receive is ideally suited to those qualifications companies should look for when choosing an outplacement company.

As the demand for outplacement services continues, companies that select vendors on the basis of professional qualifications would find that counselors holding certification as National Certified Counselors, National Certified Career Counselors, or who are licensed professional counselors would generally meet or exceed all necessary qualification standards.

William D. Young

*Career Development Services
Tulsa, OK*

The Studied Partnership

After reading "Joining Forces: Business and Education Take on Competitiveness (July 1988), I would like to share some observations based on my involvement with a partnership between Chesapeake Corporation and the West Point Schools.

Partnerships have been around a long time. The Morrill Act of 1862 laid the groundwork for the establishment of partnerships between schools, industry, and government. Until the end of World War I, these partnerships primarily provided philanthropic aid to universities for scholarships. Research became the focus of school-business alliances in the early twenties, notably at Cal-Tech—with the aircraft industry—and MIT—with the petroleum industry.

With the development of vocational education, the opportunities to develop partnerships between business and public schools flourished. Over the years, new options have been exercised in the establishment of partnerships, as the article pointed out.

Issues

So why haven't business and education more routinely embraced the concept of partnerships? There is little effort needed to convince business and education that they have a mutual goal in building a competitive workforce. Furthermore, school-business partnerships can play an integral role in achieving greater national competitiveness. But just like a well-planned training program, partnerships must be thought out completely.

Partnerships can succeed only if they are managed strategically. Each party must assess the challenges and benefits of the alliance. Partnerships can provide both schools and business with new opportunities and benefits. Both of the institutions must establish mutually agreeable operating policies by debating the benefits and risks of the partnership. More often than not, the issues that emerge will not be black and white.

Fundamental to any school-business alliance is a clear sense of mission, judicious use of common sense, and a capacity for mutual understanding. The successful partnerships are those that stress mutual benefits, are alert to possible risks, and accept the reality of trade-offs.

When planning a partnership, some philosophical considerations should be addressed:

■ Can a long-term solution be applied while industry sustains its short-term mode of operation? In other words, what will happen when the economy goes sour?

■ Is it possible to transfer a micro-level school-business intervention throughout society? The article cited many interventions that are being conducted at the local level. To affect the national problem of competitiveness, the interventions must be applicable on a broad scale.

■ Can business overcome the stigma of being self-serving? Does business have the capability to contribute to the well-being of society, or does it fulfill its responsibility only by paying taxes?

Evaluative research addressing the effectiveness of school-business partnerships is not readily available. This may be indicative of the lack of strategic planning. As a successful partnership matures, however, the collaborative efforts should go beyond individual projects. Collaborative projects will be less sporadic as a direct result of closer communications between the two institutions. The relationship truly matures when the partnership leads to ongoing and innovative projects.

Sustained partnerships will be insulated from business life cycles. Properly designed school-business partnerships will allow both institutions to address common, long-range problems, develop new approaches, and gain an awareness of each other's organizational culture.

*Craig D. Zimmerman
Chesapeake Corporation
West Point, VA*

Definitional Process Control

In "Small Steps, Big Rewards: Quality Improvement Through Pilot Groups" (July 1988), Jim Bindl and Jim Schuler make an excellent case for building support for total quality improvement with small steps. They seem, however, to use the acronym SPC to sell quality the way advertisers use sex to sell soap.

Although the benefits achieved by their teams are important, they seem to be the result of ordinary group problem-solving techniques. Statistical process control (SPC) is a powerful tool for addressing some quality problems, but it has little use in organizing tool cribs, the main example of quality improvement the authors cited.

Trainers promoting quality improvement can learn a lot from the article, but they should be careful not to be caught selling benefits that

can't be traced back to training. Little things count, and using the title "SPC program" for a more general quality improvement/group problem-solving approach can bring trouble—especially when the gap is pointed out by those who know the difference.

*John Rafter
United Technologies Control Systems
Farmington, CT*

Classic Hits

I have just finished reading Thomas W. Kopp's "Making Trainees Want to Learn" (June 1988) and wish to nominate it for your next issue of classic articles! He did a super job of analyzing and explaining how a good motivational strategy that really works can be developed even for a complicated situation. Thanks.

*Quinton L. Boroi
Erie Insurance Group
Erie, PA*

Changing Focus

The following is in response to the August 1988 "Tell Us What You Think" question concerning novel training methods.)

Instead of telling participants what to do and how to do it, and then trying to motivate them to act differently back on the job (i.e., to retain and use what they have learned), the trainer should use the workshop to shift their perception of the job.

This training approach is based on the idea that our behavior is a function of our beliefs, not of information and motivation.

For example, assume that service technicians who install or repair equipment left the workshop seeing

Issues

themselves as customer satisfiers, whose primary job is to go to a site and satisfy a customer. Fixing or installing would become a means to an end, not the purpose of the job itself. They wouldn't need to "retain" what they learned in a workshop because they wouldn't even have been told the desired behavior, or "the 10 rules for taking better care of customers." They would have shifted how they see their jobs and would naturally change their behavior and act consistently with being a customer satisfier.

The same approach can be used to change managers into leaders, people who follow orders into people who innovate, etc.

We have been using this approach with great success for the past four years.

*Morty Lefkoe
Lefkoe & Associates, Inc.
Westport, CT*

No One in Here But Us Salespeople

(The following is in response to the July 1988 "Tell Us What You Think" concerning the difference between "trainer" and "HRD professional.")

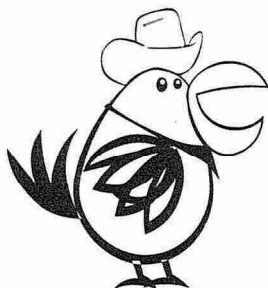
How do I view myself, as a trainer or as an HRD professional? Frankly, neither.

I view myself as a sales manager, and the staff of the Kenworth training department as salespeople. Our job is to sell our customers (i.e., Kenworth dealer personnel) on the measurable benefits that can be gained from attending our presentations, courses, clinics, and workshops. The products that we are selling are accurate, timely knowledge and hands-on technical, sales, marketing, and management skills. The benefit to the customer is increased efficiency, productivity, and profits. The medium we use to effect the sale is training. The final product benefit is a win-win relationship between all parties—the employee, the dealership, the customer, the Kenworth Truck Company, and the training department.

My job, then, is to manage the process and ensure that my sales staff has the assets and support they need to do their job.

Thank you for the opportunity to share what may be a different view of training and the human resource development process.

*Ralph L. Chapman
Kenworth Truck Company
Kirkland, WA*



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Correction

In September's article "Customer Service: Giving Companies the Competitive Edge," the vice president for training and development for Summit Health Ltd. was misidentified. His name is Mark Strunin. Sorry, Mark!

"Issues" is compiled and edited by Eric R. Blume. Send your viewpoints to: Issues, Training & Development Journal, 1630 Duke St., Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.