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Tell Us What You Think

This issue's story on business ethics refers to mission statements, often considered definitive declarations of organizational ethics.

According to a University of Michigan study, you can uncover the true intent of your organization's mission statement if you look beyond the values. Instead, examine the pronouns and count up words such as "should" and "might."

Based on a sample of 80 corporate mission statements, the study's reviewers concluded that statements heavy on "you" and "should" take on a "laying down the law" tone. But those that use "we" set an inclusive mood that lessens the distance between management and employee by making the reader feel a part of what's going on.

Companies that altogether avoid the pronoun problem can sound institutional: "Acme believes. . . ."

It's not conclusive that companies lading their mission statements with "we" are in fact more democratic; they may simply be wordsmiths. Conversely, companies wielding "you" may have the best intentions.

We're guessing you'll pull out your organization's mission statement and make your own tally. Tell us how it fared or what you think about mission statements in general.

Send your responses to "Issues," *Training & Development Journal*, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313, or fax them to Haidee Allerton at ASTD, 703/683-8103.

Still More on Ethical Reasoning in Business

The following letter is in response to two Journal *articles, "Ethical Reasoning in Business" by Robert Blake and Deborah Anne Carroll (June 1989) and "More on Ethical Reasoning in Business" by Gerald Williams (January 1990).*

One option for ensuring ethics in business that Blake, Carroll, and Williams didn't mention is to select people who already possess the capacity for good ethics.

Some assessment methods can help in selecting job candidates who are not motived by personal gain and expediency. If organizations gave more weight to the selection process, they could change their ethical climates.

Obviously, Williams doesn't give much credit to psychology, especially to Lawrence Kohlberg's moral development model. Considering the implications of Kohlberg's theory and subsequent work done by both men and women, I don't think his model is necessarily invalid simply because it is based only on men.

As for Williams labeling self-knowledge a "psychologism," that is a disparaging remark for a philosopher to make. Philosophical thought owes a lot to self-knowledge, which has long been an important factor in changing behavior.

Ethical reasoning, which leads to ethical behavior, is multidetermined, and we need multidimensional assessments to evaluate employees' motivations and values before they are hired. Such assessments do not necessarily lead to psychologism.

We need to tie ethics in business to prior moral development. Ultimately, universal principles are the seeds of ethical practices.

Thomas R. Holman
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A Rose By Any Other Name

Whether you think of yourself as a trainer or a teacher, the critical skills are the same. One very important skill is to avoid presenting knowledge as final, even in training

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workers in repetitive mechanical motions.

Training at all levels should keep in touch with the real world by getting trainees to think about world developments in relation to the area of training.

Trainers should also have a sense of mission, which is essentially the same as a deep commitment to their subject area and to the growth of their learners.

For long-term impact, training should be two-way communication. In a simple game used by behaviorial scientists to train managers, I have seen how two-way communication can lead to better job performance.

Even if you think of yourself as a specialist, effective learning calls not only for rigorous analysis but also for integration and synthesis. I think there is a tendency in rigid specialization to shut out other viewpoints.

Have the courage to simplify. Because mathematics and statistics seem to pervade every area of knowledge, there is a growing temptation to equate "sounding complicated" with training effectively.

The emphasis on math and statistics risks missing the real-world issues that are central to a given area of training. For example, the effect of the relationship between the U.S. and Japan on corporate economies is relevant to management training.

Finally, training methods are secondary to the trainer's personality, beliefs, values, and view of the world.

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Sell Like the Japanese

Here's a reader's response to "Sales Training in the 1990s" by Neil Rackham and John Wilson, which appeared in the August 1990 issue of the Journal.

If we are to move out of our "business as usual" attitude in sales, we need to make a significant change.

The focus of sales training must become this: how to sell with a mind on the future needs of the customer. Sales training should teach active listening and skillful questioning, so that salespeople can get information on what improvements and new products their customers want.

The prevailing "how to sell it" message is limited. It implies that the salesperson wants only to sell a current product or service. The focus should be on selling the now and the future—based on legitimate interest, sincere concern, and specific fact-finding.

The Japanese use a future-focused sales strategy. They continually seek out needs and wants, and then produce to meet those desires.

To succeed in the nineties, we must start using our competitors' mode of selling.

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"Issues" *is compiled and edited by* **Haldee Allerton**. *Send your views to Issues,* Training & Development Journal, *Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313. Or, fax them to Allerton at 703/683-8103.*