

Training Instructors for Industry

by HERMAN J. GEMUENDEN

President, American Society of Training Directors

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MY ASSIGNMENT is to present the views of professional training directors on the subject, "Training Instructors for Industry." In preparation for this presentation a questionnaire was sent to 100 industrial training directors selected to secure a cross section of small to large operations in a variety of industries in all parts of the country.

The general response to the questionnaire was most heartening. Any of a dozen of the responses might well have been used exactly as submitted. However, rather than to present the views of one individual, it is my purpose to give you a composite statement which blends the opinions and judgments of a truly representative group of professional industrial trainers as expressed in answers to eight specific questions.

The first question in the questionnaire asked, "In what general industrial activities or fields is there a need for trained instructors?"

Responses were almost unanimous in saying, "All of them." Expansions of this general answer revealed a need for more and better trained instructors in three general areas; namely, operations, management, and instructor training.

More instructors, but more particularly, better trained instructors, are needed in all phases of operations. In operations are included such elements as job and craft skills, trade and techni-

cal knowledge, sales and service techniques, safety and welfare procedures, inspection, quality control, maintenance, and report writing.

In the field of management, trained instructors are needed at all levels. Mentioned repeatedly was the need for instructors who can organize, present, and effect the use of sound supervisory principles and practices—instructors who can indoctrinate and activate supervisory personnel to use training as an integral and essential part of the job of supervision. Cited more often than any other was the need for instructors who can develop, in the managerial line, a more thorough appreciation of good procedures in such responsibilities as human relations, communication, and social services.

Trained teachers are needed in the field of instructor training. The need is not only one of preparing people to transmit specific job skills and job knowledge to others. That need appears to be current and everlasting, and a constant problem in every business or industry. Over and above it is the need for training people who can organize and operate complete training programs, or essential parts of training programs. There is a definite deficiency in the supply of qualified industrial trainers of training director caliber, a fact borne out not only by this questionnaire, but

by the activities of the placement committee of the American Society of Training Directors.

As was anticipated, the questionnaire established a positive and near urgent need for training instructors for industry, so the next logical question is, "From what sources does industry recruit personnel for training as instructors?" Put together, the answers read like this:

1. From the shops, laboratories, offices, and the line and staff organizations within the plant or company.
2. From other companies and other industries, by gentlemanly pirating.
3. From schools and colleges.

Those trainers who analyzed the situation more thoroughly explained that common practice is to select trainers from within the plant organization for teaching the manual skills and specific job knowledge required in the operating routine peculiar to the company. It was pointed out that this type of trainer or instructor is not hard to find. Any well-run plant, shop or office has among its operators people who are natural trainers—people who, with a little coaching and grooming, are quickly equipped to function as trainers.

Other industries and schools are looked to chiefly for specialists either in the field of training or in some highly technical phase of operation or management. It is safe to say, and interesting to note, that among the professional trainers in industry today, most of them were recruited from the school field.

Our questionnaire next asked, "What type of training must be given to potential instructors in industry?"

Answers indicate two general needs in instructor training. First, the person with a background of industrial or business experience must be given teacher training; and second, the person possessed of teaching experience must be trained in industrial procedures.

Of particular interest in the answers to this question are the many cautionary reminders that, good as it is, the familiar JIT program, so popular during the last war, is inadequate to train a job trainer. The opinion of training directors today is that, assuming the potential trainer knows the job for which he is to be a trainer, he must be given, in addition, a complete understanding of the learning process and those factors that aid or retard it; he must be made fully appreciative of individual differences, attitudes, interests, motivation, plateaus, and other factors that bear upon learning and teaching.

As one person put it, "We still use the JIT program in the training of new supervisors but it seems to me there is much more to be desired. The J program is pretty much a presentation of the steps to follow, whereas what is needed is an understanding on the part of the person to be the trainer of what is involved in the learning process."

Common opinion among training directors is that the person who is to train trainers, and the supervisor falls into this category, must be well trained in conference procedures and classroom techniques as well as in the 4-step method of job instruction. The use of visual aids, program organization, and follow-up training practices should all be part of his preparation for his industrial training responsibilities.

One of our training directors summed up this point very nicely. I quote him, "Surely the type of training to be given potential instructors should be far more fundamental than is currently the case. I am referring to a much, much greater stress on a thorough grounding in the psychology of learning and in teaching techniques. When most instructors today are not even well equipped by training to use the practical part effectively, and who are as prejudiced a crowd about the limitations of learners as almost any group, you find then that we need to think seriously in terms of people rather than just program planning."

The questionnaire next asked, "By what standards are potential instructors selected for training?" Answers run like this:

Know-how of subject. Job skills and job knowledge.

Experience in teaching or breaking in workers.

Ability to express self.

Administrative experience in business or industry.

Personality, appearance, enthusiasm.

Ability to get along with people. Leadership traits.

Analytical and creative ability.

Capacity for showmanship—the salesman's attitude.

Ability to inspire confidence.

Attitude, sensitivity, comprehension, practicality.

Ability to impress others.

This is only a partial list of the selection standards that are mentioned often. They indicate that the trainer must be a capable leader, sensitive to the feelings and needs of others; and capable of directing their interests and actions. Above

all, the trainer who is to grow and develop must be a visionary and creative thinker, capable of expressing himself effectively formally and informally, both orally and in writing. He must possess a practical intellect that quickly grasps and comprehends industrial and human relations situations.

So far the questionnaire reveals that training directors are aware of a need for training new instructors and that they have some very definite ideas as to the type of person and the type of training desirable and necessary to the preparation of instructors.

To determine what they are doing about the problem and what more they think should be done, the following four questions were asked:

1. How is industry currently meeting the need for training its instructors?

2. How can industries cooperate in operating a stepped-up program for training instructors?

3. What can be done for the company that has no training director or training department?

4. In the event of all-out mobilization would industry again need governmental assistance to effect adequate training?

Many of the firms that have formal training programs are engaged in instructor training, and their objectives range from training job instructors to training training directors. Larger organizations with multiple plants operate central schools for training instructors. From them our questionnaire brought some really well organized Instructor Training Manuals. Organizations with smaller staffs avail themselves of schools and institutes both public and private.

In the metropolitan areas where groups of industrial training directors are organized as chapters of the American Society of Training Directors inspirational and educational meetings are scheduled for the benefit of active and potential trainers in business and industry.

In at least four areas of the country, Associations of Training Directors are cooperating with schools in the operation of institute programs to train new training directors. These programs are designed primarily for the benefit of those firms that do not currently have a training department or staff. They have been organized by professional trainers actively engaged in industrial training; and actual training sessions and workshops are conducted by trainers loaned to the project by industry. Participating schools provide the housing, equipment, scheduling and clerical work, and some of the instruction.

Many firms engage schools or consultants to design special programs and to prepare trainers or instructors for them, who in turn will prepare additional instructors for the special program.

While thinking of the cooperative efforts of schools and industry, I should like to quote a training man whose opinions I respect: "In my opinion, industry can cooperate best by taking an active interest in formal educational institutions. Industrial organizations have sometimes been reluctant to work with and support those educational institutions who are supplying trained instructors. I think that we in industry do not consider it our responsibility to cooperate with the formal educational institu-

tions. Instead of going to the schools, industry has expected the schools to come to them. It is my thinking that each must go to the other, with their problems—problems which are, for the most part, mutual."

While the indications are that many companies are doing a fine job of instructor training, individually, collectively, and by availing themselves of existing school facilities, there is a widespread feeling that much more remains to be done, as is evidenced by the following quotation from an industrial trainer:

"I would say that less than 10 per cent of industry is currently doing a really good job of meeting its need for training its instructors. A somewhat larger group of industries is doing a halfway job of meeting training needs, but I believe that the majority of companies are making little or no effort to properly train job instructors."

Another, answering the question, "How is industry currently meeting the need for training instructors?" says, "As a whole it is not. There is a great need for training instructors in industry which should be done under the supervision of a top training director within industry."

Another, answering the same question, says, "Haphazardly, by grabbing anyone who shows a little interest, or by passing the job onto some consultant or local school."

Still another says, "By hit or miss methods. So far these methods seem to be sufficient because to date industry has not yet been squeezed enough by personnel shortages to do otherwise."

Many companies do not employ a training director, and so would be hand-

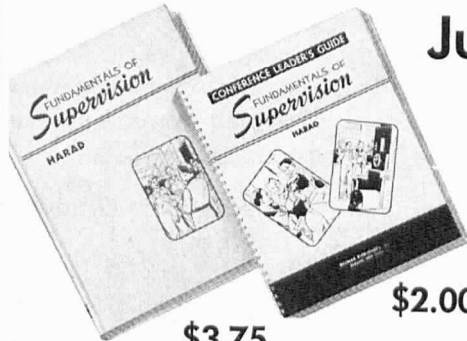
icapped if suddenly confronted with either changed production or wholesale addition of workers. To meet their needs for instructor training is likely to be a real national problem. Several solutions have been presented and tried, as was mentioned earlier. Significant in all of them is the fact that schools, and especially schools offering or specializing in vocational curricula, are expected to play an important role.

Typical of opinions relative to aid for new or smaller industries in the field of instructor training is this one, "The smaller company which has no training director or training department is certainly not 'out in the cold.' There are a number of places where such a com-

pany can procure materials, information, and even personnel to handle their training activities. It seems to me that the question should be, 'What can be done to sell these companies on the necessity for having training directors or training departments.'

"In many of these smaller companies the training function is a combination job handled by someone who may have additional responsibilities in the area of safety, personnel, or industrial engineering. Any company wishing to set up a training department can rely upon the American Society of Training Directors, local and state educational institutions, and any of a number of private consulting and planning services."

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TRAINING INSTRUCTORS—

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Opinion is widely divided as to the need for governmental assistance in the field of training should we be confronted with all-out mobilization. Only three replies to the questionnaire advocated a return to something like the rigid J programs of World War II. Many foresaw the need for governmental subsidation of industrial training as it might apply to war contracts, but with more latitude and flexibility in the application of the training program. The vast majority of replies looked upon training as a standard industrial function to be taken care of by industry itself with, wherever possible, the assistance of existing school facilities.

My own deductions from a careful perusal of the expressed opinions of nearly a hundred professional industrial trainers, are:

1. There is a current need for additional instructors in business and industry, and with the growing expansion of industry due to current economic conditions and the threat of war the need is ever growing.

2. Those few industries with good training programs within their own organizations are meeting their own current needs and are preparing to meet future training requirements, but much remains to be done among our country's industries.

3. Training people appreciate the potential demands of industry for qualified trainers and training directors, and in some places are doing something about it by offering their own services and enlisting the aid of schools in mak-

ing instructor training available to those plants who do not have their own training staffs.

4. Vocational schools and colleges could be much more active in the training of instructors for industry, especially by availing themselves of the services and counsel of professional industrial trainers in the planning and conduct of coaching, institute, and full course programs.

5. There is divided feeling as to the need for governmental assistance in the areas of training in the event of another war emergency, but there is near unanimity among training people that something broader and more flexible than the J programs would be essential.

6. That the time is at hand when everybody and every institution concerned with industrial training should be making plans to meet the training needs of a national emergency.

MINUTES—

(Continued from preceding page)

of the Michigan Training Council and to make recommendations as to extent and ways and means of assistance that ASTD should give to this publication made a report of their small survey.

It was reported that one-half of the Michigan Training Council budget goes to the support of the abstracts and it was the feeling of those present from MTC that if the abstracts have national value they should use them, if not, the entire project should be thrown out. There was no decision or action taken.

Revision of Constitution. It was moved by Doc Laffer and seconded by

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