

# Management Development in Germany

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Greetings to all my friends in ASTD. I have been in Berlin, Germany since September 1953 on a special technical assistance assignment for the U. S. Foreign Operations Administration European Recovery Program through the Council for International Progress in Management with which ASTD is affiliated.

The purpose of my task is to help West German industry with its management development and training problems through the introduction of our American philosophy and methods in this field.

Berlin firms in general have excellent employee training programs and some foreman training, but practically nothing in the middle and top management areas. This seems to be a startling new venture for both the mind and soul of the German industrialist. Even the language does not lend itself easily to such terms as "Management Development," "Teamwork," "Communications," or "Executive Inventory."

By the time one has translated some of our American words into German, much of their real meaning is lost. As a result, I have been forced to develop a working vocabulary which brings us closer together when we try to understand each other's ideas. At the same time, I have found it necessary to use some English words and then attempt

to "educate" the German in proper connotations. For example, there is no good German term for our word "teamwork," so we use the word as is and then spend hours trying to establish a common ground of understanding. This is only one of hundreds of problems arising everyday, the importance of which just cannot be underestimated.

My job consists of visiting plants and sitting down with top management to exchange ideas for the establishment of management development concepts and actual programs. About thirty firms sent key men to a series of seminars I have been conducting at RKW (the Productivity Center here) for full discussion and study of the subject in great detail.

As a result, twenty of these men have been qualified as directors of management development for their own companies, and six others are now certified as "trainers" of training directors for Berlin. This is the first of such programs in all Europe. In this respect, Berlin has taken the lead. The group is now in the progress of forming an organization for mutual exchange of management development problems for the continuance of the program when I leave Berlin in March. (It looks as if we'll have a similar situation here, as we did in 1945 in Chicago when ASTD was formed.)

## Exchange of Ideas

A Deutsches Ausbildungsdirektor's Society with exchange of experiences with ASTD members in America seems to be their aim. I can think of no better way to promote an understanding and good relations between our top managers in both countries and at the same time give real meaning to the term "Management Development."

To the German mind "Management Development" is an art, not a science. When you realize that they are paying a high compliment to the subject by the use of this word "art," and further, that including it as equally important with the technical side of business, you begin to realize what a revolutionary process is taking place.

To the Germans, education is a matter for the schools and colleges, not for industry. When a man is a manager, he is an "expert," and it is difficult for them to understand why he needs any further training. When I discuss their internal production and technical problems, and point out the potential value of better planning, more delegation of responsibility, clarification of policies, the power of good communications, and the improvement of organization through better trained managers, I begin to see a light dawning on their faces—a sudden realization that "this is good business."

Anything that can be proven to have a direct connection with the ultimate success of the firm holds their attention and enlists their active support. This is happening in the field of Management Development.

I must always be careful not to give the impression of "experting" the pro-

gram at every turn. The German is too prone to take the "expert's" own word as gospel and to rush headlong into a program without planning carefully for the long pull. They are so used to knowing they are right in the technical field that they have a tendency to formulaize the process for making a better manager. Take the instance of the seminar participant who wanted a formula for "teamwork."

There is no word here that expresses our concept of Management Development, nor which includes all levels of management as a unit. The term we use "Weiterbildungsprogramm für die Betriebsführung" does not include the foremen as part of management in the truest sense. It really denotes middle and upper strata.

Since we are attempting also to raise the status of the foreman and bring him into the picture in the right relationship, we have used the word "Betriebsführung" purposely to create discussion on the subject. The word "training" is not used because it always connotes lower worker and employee training in Germany and would not be received very well on management levels.

Instead we use "Ausbildungs" which immediately throws the whole level of the program on a parallel with university education, a position well-respected here on the Continent. A typical Harvard Business School for industrial executives and managers, until now, was simply in the thinking of either management or the professors. I believe we are beginning to see a closer relationship and active interest along these lines here in Berlin.

The meaning of the word "communications" is a one-way street in the German executive's mind. Luckily, some of my seminar members have been to some of your plants in America on exchange programs, and thus, we are able to make greater headway in getting over the idea of three-way exchange of information and ideas between and among management levels.

In our recent discussion of the term "Management Inventory," I think we broke all records of noise established by all the Hooperating devices on all American quiz programs. Donnerwetter—you'd have thought I was inciting a revolution. They plunged bravely into the subject and, with the help of one of the more enlightened university professors, we were able to prevent chaos and restore order.

It raised the very touchy question of even daring to appraise management. To train understudies for Berlin industry was equally touchy. After all, management positions are not so plentiful that a manager should think very seriously about training one of his subordinates to take his place in the organization, now or in the future. Even under these peculiar circumstances, we seem, nevertheless to be making headway.

Despite all these apparently unsurmountable difficulties in language and idea concepts, we are catching the enthusiasm of many key Berlin firms for emphasizing effectiveness in management action.

Subject matter has ranged from the broader topics of good management principles to the very specific needs of each key manager's development. Case studies, role playing, job rotation, classroom,

seminar, conference, committee, and all the proven methods we use in America are being employed both in the discussions and in practice. I hope to leave in Berlin a training center well staffed and equipped with visual aids to carry on an effective program for German industry.

### Original Purpose

That was one of our original purposes. Better still, I hope to leave sound planning, organization and execution of effective management development programs, by well-qualified Ausbildungsdirektors.

Germany is one of the few nations this side of the pond that is really amortizing its Marshall Plan Loans. Aside from the contribution my small efforts might make toward world peace, I am very much interested in the success of this program from the point of view of an American taxpayer. Don't be surprised if you receive requests for information from some of these people from time to time for I have given them much information about ASTD and some of your programs in the States. You can make a valuable contribution by answering their letters and requests as quickly as possible.

This fledgling organization of Education Directors could very well be one of the keys over here for placing the emphasis on developing men rather than machines for the long-range improvement of their firms. In addition, I hope we are setting a pattern in German industry which all the leaders of Europe can use to advantage in creating greater responsibility and cooperation in political and diplomatic circles.