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Tell Us What You Think

A recent survey conducted by the management consulting firm Goodrich & Sherwood Company of employees at 100 of its top clients indicates that most employees are satisfied with their companies and experience fulfillment in their work. Seventy-nine percent are, in a word, "happy."

A comparable number, however, worry about job security; believe they aren't paid enough; and feel they aren't apprised of company plans, programs, and policies.

Employees at many companies are also dissatisfied because they are "plateauing," a condition that will spread in the next 20 years, workplace experts say. As baby-boom workers reach middle-management age—35 and older—many companies are eliminating middle-management jobs. Thus, millions will find themselves stuck in the same jobs, or plateauing.

Predictions are that plateaued workers will increasingly become either complacent or discontent, or will simply quit.

Some companies have tried to compensate employees by offering such alternatives as lateral transfers, more independence, and a philosophy that success need not be measured by promotions. For example, several accounting firms have created a new position, that of "director," to hold onto valuable employees who feel they should make partner, but who won't. Along with the new title go such partner perks as larger offices and more vacation time.

We'd be interested in knowing if plateauing, or any related discontent, has struck your organization and what is being done about it. Send your responses to "Issues," *Training & Development Journal*, 1630 Duke Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.

Letters Were Pessimistic

In reaction to letters in the April 1990 "Issues," I find the pessimism expressed or implied in all of them to be counterproductive. I think there is a growing awareness of the need for human resource development in industry that is evident not only in the United States, but in Europe, Southeast Asia, and Australia.

The opportunites have never been better for HRD people who are serious about their profession, who are willing to learn and grow, and who have a sincere desire to serve. I switched to this occupation 23 years ago and I think the future for trainers will be exciting and fun!

Hal Arney
Yardley, Pennsylvania

Keep Them Coming Back, Revisited

We heartily agree with Joanne Buttici ("Issues," February 1990). We think her letter clearly presents an awkward issue. Running any meeting requires ruling with a firm and friendly hand.

We have found that when we confront managers who return late from breaks, they express their admiration. Our advice: Trainers who keep such confrontations objective and unemotional have a lot to gain from them.

Ted R. Wells
ICI Americas Inc.
Wilmington, Delaware

Hal S. Klein
Organizational Performance
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Acme, Pennsylvania

Transcendent Responsibilities Reconsidered

The following is in response to a letter from Thomas L. Quick in April 1990's "Issues."

In my view, the transcendent responsibilities each of us has can be

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compatible with the so-called "short-term-thinking" management culture that Quick objects to. We can ensure that CEOs and their companies recognize long-range as well as short-term human resource considerations.

CEOs can see as well as anyone that dumping employees with valid company experience in favor of untried juniors is counterproductive—if experienced employees demonstrate a willingness to adapt and change. The goal should be to ensure through training, coaching, and counseling that every employee builds the skills needed to take on new jobs that are introduced into the company.

We must promote skill training, help people cope with the ups and downs of reorganization, and try to build systems that create opportunities for people. This is our transcendent responsibility, not Quick's implication that we ought to train for skills that are of more use to the individual than to the company. Properly designed training should benefit both.

In no instance should human resource people be "countercultural." If we can't influence and support changes in organizational culture, we would be better off starting new companies than risking destroying ones that exist. More jobs than ours are at stake.

David Crisp
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Can Interactive Videos Replace Trainers?

Before deciding if interactive video is the right choice for an organization, trainers need to ask a bigger question: What are the training objectives?

In this context, discussion steers away from simplistic debates on the merits of live training versus interactive media and focuses instead on the best delivery systems for meeting the objectives.

Rather than viewing any one delivery system as a panacea, the organizations we've been working with use interactive videodiscs only

when they know that their use will add value. Many elect to use videodiscs for follow-ups to live training in order to hone performance beyond the confines of the seminar experience.

These training professionals are not worried that videodiscs will insidiously erode their authority or take over their jobs. They realize that training must be measured by results, not events.

Trainers want to be sure their investment in training seminars has maximum payoff. Interactive video can ensure payoff by reinforcing and sharpening the skills learned in a seminar or in other types of training.

One large financial services organization conducts a three-day seminar on selling skills. Afterward, the salespeople use an interactive videodisc program to practice the skills they've learned. The program's built-in feedback allows a sales trainee to make and correct mistakes in front of a forgiving computer screen, rather than face to face with a customer, where a single misstep can be costly.

What are the results? Research conducted with 41 of the trainees shows that the program increased both their confidence and their ability to apply selling skills.

Needless to say, the trainers in this organization are not sitting idly while a videodisc system does the work. They are continuing to use their platform, facilitation, and coaching skills, to make sure the training works. By adding interactive video to their range of solutions, they multiply, not diminish, their own effectiveness and their value to the organization.

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"Issues" is compiled and edited by **Haidee Allerton**. Send your views to *Issues*, Training & Development Journal, 1630 Duke Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.