

HOW DO YOUR TRAINERS GROW?

BY PAUL H.
CHADDOCK
(MARCH, 1971)

"What's the big deal? I don't see why we have to spend a lot of time and effort getting John ready to be a trainer! After all, he was one of the top salesmen in the region. If he can't teach others how to be successful, who can? All he really needs to know is where the course filmstrips are and how to run the projector! We ought to let him tell the new men 'like it is.' After all, that's why we appointed John to be a trainer. He really knows what it takes to sell!"

It is pretty obvious to training directors and business managers that there can be two ways to approach training problems. One is, "Why spend time defining the problem? Let's just do it!" The other is, "Well . . . before we can be specific about the solution we have to write our S-R tables." There can be too much of both and not enough of each . . . with either condition widening the gap to mutual understanding. There is, however, no question that the gap is

lessening between the role that management has identified as "training" and the "systematic and technological approach" that many trainers advocate. Considerable time could be spent discussing the cause of this situation and how to improve it.

The important element to identify is that the condition is really the result of poor communication. The responsibility for improving it rests in the hands of training — NOT management. Where you presently are on the "understanding highway" will influence the design of a train-the-trainer program.

Unfortunately, many potentially good trainer development programs are never conducted because management decides that too much time and money are being spent to solve an "insignificant" problem. Conversely, some training directors do not seriously try to develop their trainers because they feel they would be criticized for making the effort . . . an effort that might be misinterpreted.

Those persons responsible for

the development of the trainers within an organization must also be concerned with other questions. Answering them in terms of a specific organization's needs is Step One in determining how to best prepare a trainer for his role.

Is the source of trainers based on capability or availability?

What is the most advantageous mode of training trainers? (Individualized coaching, formal classroom setting or two-day seminars throughout the year.)

What is the definition of a good trainer for this organization?

What is the best way to evaluate the trainer's effectiveness?

What should be the difference in training those people who are to be career trainers versus those who are in a training capacity only as a step to some future position?

The answers to these questions pose entirely different kinds of training requirements. Therefore a well-thought-out picture of the role of the trainer needs to be painted prior to selecting content.

Programs designed to train trainers often deal in the skills and techniques of training. Mastery of

these skills and techniques is important. The success of their use, however, is directly proportionate to their relevance to the learning situation. All skills are designed to be used in given situations. If the situation is there, the skills mastered, whammo . . . success! But if the situation is slightly adjusted, the skill won't "fit" exactly as learned, and the success level is adversely affected.

A story told by a very successful salesman about his early days in selling demonstrates a problem in technique training. He referred to the relevance of the skills he learned in a basic sales training program with actual experience in the customer's office. He stated that he scored very high in the courses offered in salesmanship, but that when he called on the prospects he found he had a problem. He knew his lines — but the prospect didn't know his!

Familiar problem? How similar to the considerations for determining content in a train-the-trainer program. Trainers must be exposed to the skills and methodology appropriate for the learning situations in which they will be involved. In turn, they must have an opportunity to try out these techniques prior to actual use. But the more important consideration is getting the trainer to understand his relationship with the learner, as well as the theories and principles basic in a good learning environment. If the trainer understands the principles of good learning and knows the skills available for his use, then his job becomes one of matching an appropriate skill to the type of learning situation he is trying to create.

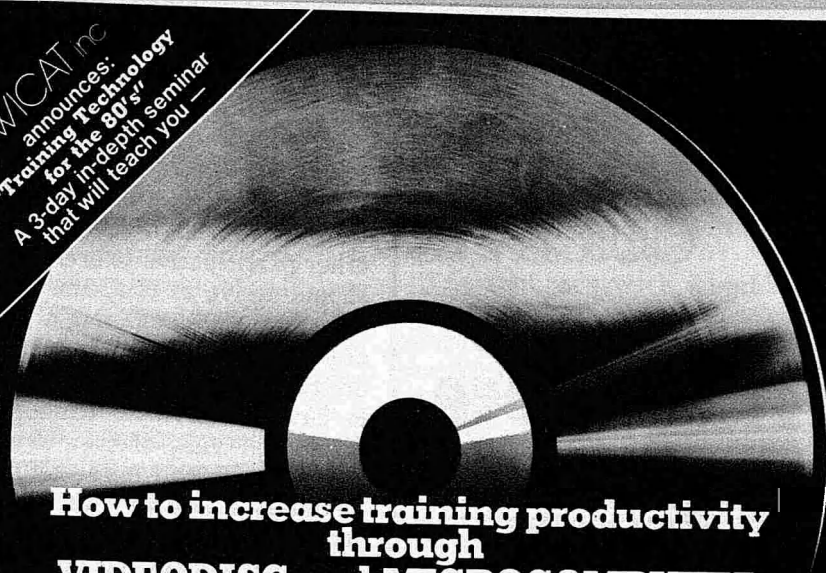
What is the Role of the Trainer?

The role of the trainer does not change but the way he plays the role does depend on the environment in which he finds himself.

The role of the trainer is to establish an atmosphere for the learning process to occur and to assist in the process when he can.

Insuring that the trainer understands his function in accordance with this definition should be a prime objective in any train-the-trainer program. Initially it may

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be difficult to gain such agreement. The trainer of first-line supervisors and the instructor of computer programmers may see their roles as quite different. However, through discussions and other participative exercises, they should arrive at the same conclusion. Actually combining a variety of trainers into a single workshop or training session will be helpful in having individual trainers expand their view of their true responsibilities and agree that it is basically helping the learner achieve objectives.

The curriculum for a train-the-trainer program can be divided into two areas — for trainers who are primarily concerned with the presentation of material prepared by others and for trainers who are primarily concerned with the development of materials and not the presentation.

Many times, because of economy or availability of personnel, both functions will be performed by the same trainer. However, for determining the elements necessary to aid the growth of trainers, we need to be more explicit in defining their role. Therefore, in this article, trainers will be classified as either Presenters or Designers, with the content directed toward preparation of Presenters.

Presenters

The title of the Presenter may be Management Development Specialist, Sales Trainer, Professional Personnel Instructor or Industrial Trainer. Regardless of the type of training in which the Presenter is involved, the following subjects are important in developing the trainer:

- Communication
- Learning Environment
- Feedback Devices
- Evaluation Techniques
- Discipline Measures
- Presentation Devices

Many avenues of communication are open to the Presenter for disseminating information to trainees. It is imperative that the trainer recognizes that communication is not one-way. For true communication to occur, both sender and receiver must actively participate. Yes, a presenter must be able to speak well, have a good vocabu-

lary, good enunciation and appear at ease as he verbalizes. However, these skills are normally developed in one who is to be a public speaker or lecturer. The skills of public speaking are not to be confused with skills required in teaching.

Communication Barriers

The objective of the training program is to get the skills and knowledge, as required for the job, into the student. The trainer finds himself in between the job-required knowledge and the trainee.

In this context it could be said that the trainer is a barrier. Barriers can be both good and bad. However, if there were some way to transfer the knowledge and the skills of the job directly into the trainee, the trainer would not even be required. Unfortunately, instructional technology has not advanced to that point, although programmed instruction, computer-assisted instruction, teaching machines and other learning processes are attempting to reduce the barrier.

The existence of this barrier makes it apparent that the trainer must continually be aware of his responsibility to the student. He must be more concerned with his listening skills than his speaking . . . more in tune with the lessons of perception than operation of A-V devices . . . more interested in maintaining a learning environment than his personal dress.

Another question to be answered is how to make the trainer feel the effects of both bad and good communication. If the basic premise that "all learning is self-learning" is valid, then the media chosen for development of trainers should be selected to give them a high degree of discovery.

Bad Learning

Participating in a bad learning situation is much more meaningful than talking about the characteristics and dangers of a bad learning situation.

A good technique to do this is to involve the trainer deliberately in bad communication situations where he can feel, first hand, the frustrations which they produce. Examples of concepts and prob-

lems to use as participative exercises would be:

1. This is how much there is to learn
How much the trainee knows
How much you have time to present
How much the trainee hears
How much he remembers in 24 hours
How much he knows two weeks later

2. Commonly used words mean different things to different people. Examples: FAT, NOODLE, FREE, HOT, DIG.

3. How poor listening can distort the message as it is passed from one person to another.

4. When verbal instructions are given for a simple task and no feedback is allowed, the result is misunderstanding. (Vividly demonstrates a danger when lecturing with no provision for feedback.)

5. Power of words over thoughts. ("Think of anything you like except a red cow sitting under a Christmas tree.")

6. People tend to prejudge messages and the sender which results in misunderstanding. (Design to show that "ego" is ever-present in communication and influences communication effectiveness.)

7. People do not make the effort to measure objectively but rather tend to judge subjectively the messages received.

8. If messages are perceived to be in unfamiliar terms or context, listeners tend to become frustrated and will not make the effort to gain understanding . . . they will "tune out" the sender.

These are a few of the problems and principles on which activities and exercises can be based. A conclusion which these activities should produce is that . . . trainers who attempt to "impress" rather than "express" do not help people learn effectively.

Learning Environment

Learning environment is of concern to the Presenter. Factors which create it are both psychological and physical. Questions to

answer are: What is a learning environment? How does a trainer get it? How does he lose it? What can be done to maintain it?

Simply stated, a learning environment is one which is conducive to the learning process. It is an atmosphere in which the trainee has as few distractions from primary learning stimuli as possible. It should contain the tools for learning. Its location could be a classroom, a factory work station, an airplane simulator or a nursing station.

Recognizing that the student is the most important person in the classroom coupled with an attempt to at least neutralize the learner's attitude toward the learning situation is prerequisite to establishing a healthy learning environment.

Understanding and practicing empathy will be invaluable to the trainer as he attempts to answer the previous questions. Realistic empathetic answers to: Was the trainee asked to attend or did he volunteer? How does he feel about training? What has he probably

heard about this session? What does he need to know? What does he know now? What is his feeling about previous training experiences? How will he feel as he enters the training environment based on what he sees?

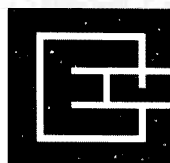
The accuracy with which the trainer is able to answer these considerations will have a great influence on how successful the learning environment he creates will be. Putting himself in the trainee's shoes can be invaluable toward having the trainer and the trainee heading for the same goal.

Psychological

A person's attitude (either positive or negative) toward a learning experience will directly affect the amount of knowledge he obtains. Therefore, the trainer must recognize this truth as he makes his plans to stand before his students. Preparation of the trainer to establish a healthy learning environment can be done paradoxically . . . for example: submitting him to unpleasant or distracting learning situations. Developing

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him in this area might also include having him think about:

- The influence of distracting stimuli in the training situation on the primary stimulus being introduced.

- That behavior training is influenced by values and attitudes.

- That attitude transfer from trainer to trainee can be positive or negative toward learning.

- How superiority-inferiority relationships must be neutralized.

- The role that perception plays in influencing student response.

Translating these considerations into content for a train-the-trainer program could be done in a variety of ways. Using a dimension of perception as an example . . . a person's perception of a stimulus is influenced by the satisfaction or dissatisfaction he experienced when he was last confronted with that particular stimulus.

How to make the potential trainer aware of this dimension of perception and its influence on a student might be to introduce a short case and ask him to respond. The case might include a description of an industrial training program in which role play was to be used.

The instructor, getting to a place in the course where reinforcement of concepts was planned, might announce that, after lunch, the group would role play some situations. Students who had previously participated in role play would have various reactions. One had been embarrassed, one thought it was a waste of time, one felt the experience was helpful and one had been videotaped and overly-criticized during a recap. The trainer could be asked to respond to questions about how to introduce the role play or about probable reactions he would get if he were to announce the exercise in different ways.

Developing the trainer by forcing him through a thought process of planning for a favorable atmosphere, instead of preparing him to react to problems and unfavorable situations, will allow him to produce more effective and efficient instruction — and thus better learning.

Clearly-defined objectives understood by both the trainer and the trainee play an important part in establishing a good environment. The answers to the questions, Where am I going? . . . How will I get there? . . . and How will I know I've arrived? Should be shared at the outset of any training session with the trainee. The trainee must accept the importance of the objectives in terms of relevant job preparation, agree that he is capable of achieving them and commit himself to the task of going about it.

Physical

How a training room is arranged will influence the attitude of the trainee and thus the effectiveness of the learning environment. The student, walking into a classroom with a podium and theatre-style seats, immediately recognizes that he is supposed to play a role. As he sits in the theatre-style seats he is expected to be the "dummy" and the man who is to stand behind the podium will be the "expert." No words need express this — the physical atmosphere does it. If, on the other hand, he comes into a training session where tables form a "U" or chairs are set in small circles, he knows that he is to be an active participant.

The trainer must recognize that the physical setting in the classroom will automatically initiate a trainee's reaction. Theatre-style seating with a podium is not necessarily negative, but it will be interpreted quickly by the learner in terms of an expected role. If the two are inconsistent, it is possible that the learning will be less than desired.

Feedback

Feedback is a dimension of evaluation and should be designed to answer the question, How am I doing? The program should make the trainer aware of the necessity to be continually striving to know the progress of each student. Emphasizing that feedback is not an entity unto itself, but a process, is also important. The trainer should recognize that concepts learned in communications and learning environments are being continued at this stage for a different purpose.

Questions which provide feedback are: Where is the class as a group? Where are the individuals? Is the trainer going too fast? Too slowly? Are the students drawing correct conclusions? Is the language of instruction the language of the students? Are the objectives of the program being accomplished? Forcing the trainer to think of ways to best answer these types of questions will be a meaningful exercise for him.

Feedback must be practical and seem to be a normal part of instruction. To spend too much time devising unique and complicated feedback devices could be analogous to the old quip, "The operation was successful . . . but the patient died."

Examples of feedback come in three forms: verbal, visual and participative. Verbal feedback devices could include . . . Pick up your pencil and write. . . . Would someone please explain . . . or . . . on page 34, what do you find . . . or . . . In your own words, what did we just say?

Non-verbal or visual feedback devices include looks on peoples' faces, the absence or presence of taking notes, the absence or presence of questions, nods of heads, and so on.

Participative exercises used for feedback can be role play, games, problem solving, case studies and a variety of other involvement-type presentation devices. Presentation devices such as these can also be used to teach new information. The concern at this point, however, is having the trainer understand how to determine the effectiveness of what he has taught. Therefore, presentation devices can be looked at as multiple-use instruments.

Probably the most overused and misused type of feedback device is a test. It is often possible for the trainer to be completely in tune with where the trainees are without ever giving a "test." It remains a mystery how a program on salesmanship can be measured by a true/false test!

When discussing feedback, a

technique which helps reinforce its effectiveness and practicality, is listing each feedback device used to this point in the program. Thus, when the question is asked, "That's a good idea, but how do I do it?" the answer becomes simple. By asking the trainees, "Do you remember when we. . . .?" or "How did you feel when we asked you to. . . .?" it becomes easier for them to reply.

Evaluation

As previously stated, feedback is a dimension of evaluation. Its prime objective is to determine the progress of trainees toward course objectives. Feedback or evaluation, in that sense, should be continuous throughout the course.

Evaluation, as discussed here, will relate to course validity and trainer performance. Course validity is defined as how relevant is instruction to job performance requirements. Trainer performance evaluation is defined as how effective is the Presenter in assisting the learning process.

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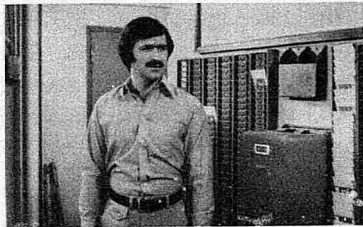
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The three areas to consider in any evaluation are: (1) Design and Construction, (2) Administration and Implementation and (3) Documentation and Analysis.

Course Validity

Design and construction of an evaluation technique should be based on course objectives. If the course has been designed to teach behaviorally-stated objectives, then the design and construction of evaluation devices becomes simplified. Properly established objectives will state the behavior requirements, under what conditions and to what standard. If the job to be trained for is the operation of a piece of equipment and the objective states that the student will be able to operate it, then the evaluation technique should be operation. The trainer who designs evaluation techniques based on how easy they are to grade or how much time will be necessary to analyze them, may find that grades and the performance capability of the students have no relationship.

Administration and implementation of evaluation techniques must be well planned and instituted. The climate in which an evaluation technique is administered can have a positive or negative effect on the student participating in the evaluation.

Yes, tests are a motivator. Yes, everybody likes to score well on tests. But rarely do people like to take tests. Avoiding the use of the word "tests" is probably a good rule in adult training or industrial development, disguising it by the words exam, quiz, or series of questions. If the trainee understands the objectives of the program, wants to perform on his job, then he will be willing to participate in finding out for himself how well he is prepared to do that job. The trainer understanding administration and implementation based on these considerations will obtain more valid evaluation.

Documentation and analysis of evaluation is an often forgotten and yet important dimension. This area has to include the supervision of the training activity and its attitude toward the evaluation. If nothing is ever done with the

results of evaluation, the chances are the trainer will not be enthusiastic about trying to get valid data. If, on the other hand, the changes in course content or pacing or sequencing or presentation devices result from evaluation, then the trainer, seeing its value, will be a strong advocate.

A dialogue about evaluation of a course might go like this:

Training costs money!

Training's responsibility is to get the most out of the investment.

Does the course content do what it's supposed to do?

What is it supposed to do?

Change behavior!

What behavior?

That which prepares people to perform on the job.

So why evaluate course content?

To see if it prepares people to perform on the job!

A series of questions on evaluating trainees' progress might go the same way:

To see if they are learning.

What should they be learning?

The skills they can use on the job.

What or why aren't they learning?

Either the course content wasn't valid or the presentation wasn't clear.

What should be done?

Change either the course content or the presentation!

Why?

To make it prepare people to perform on the job.

If it is agreed that all areas of evaluation lead to one goal, namely, to determine how effective the trainee is prepared for the job, then the most valid form of evaluation will not be based on content but on the student.

Trainer Performance

The real task in developing a criterion for evaluating training performance is to differentiate between the objective and subjective views of trainer behavior. First, he must understand the implication of the behaviorally-stated objective. Then he can develop testing devices to determine the student's progress toward the achievement of that objective — the real evaluation of the trainer's effective-

ness. More than the objective, however, determines how the trainer must evaluate his own progress. Time limitations are usually set for achieving instructional objectives.

Example: A training objective is to have the student able to perform a machine function with a 90 percent error-free rate, with teaching time determined at four hours. Therefore, the trainer would have to evaluate his effectiveness in terms of not only, "Is the student able to make the machine operate properly?" but, "Was the student able to do it within the four hours?" Obviously the adequacy of the four hours is not being discussed here. The example assumes that four hours is ample.

Tests were mentioned as an evaluation device. Teacher-made tests, objective, essay, oral or performance, can and should be used by the trainer as much for self-evaluation as to determine student progress. Understanding this and also communicating this intent to a student will probably produce more valid testing results than if the student views the test as only one for his own use.

There is a concept of trainer-trainee relationship which has many applications, one of which is trainer evaluation. This concept is called Delegated and Directed Learning. Delegated and Directed involve looking at where the responsibility has been placed for learning. In Delegated Learning, the student is highly participative, discovering, solving, applying new information to knowledge he presently has to acquire new knowledge. In other words, the responsibility for learning has been delegated to the student. The trainer is primarily performing a counseling or monitoring function. Examples would be discussion, problem solving and role play.

In Directed Learning, the trainer assumes the role of authority while disseminating information with the student primarily serving as a sponge. This is not to be misconstrued as all bad. How can a student properly construct a balance sheet if he doesn't know what it is? Or how can he arrive at a correct analysis of a labor griev-

ance if he doesn't know the terms of the labor contract and corporate policy? Things such as definitions, rules and formulas must be directed to a student before he can be expected to apply them.

This concept is in no way contrary to the principle that all learning is self-learning. It does, however, identify the source of the information to be learned and the mode. Delegated and Directed Learning have obvious consideration dimensions for the designer for both content and media selection. He should continually strive to build the highest degree of participation into training material.

A Trainer Test

This concept has application in evaluating trainer performance. Take a sheet of paper, and draw a line down the center of it. Head one side Delegated and the other side Directed.

A trainer can analyze, in advance of his presentation, just how much participative learning each instruction unit has. If he finds that Directed is filled in and very

little is on the other side, he should ask himself, "Why and how can I transfer more instruction to the other side?" He may answer the "why" by blaming it on the designer. But more careful self-analysis may reveal that it is based on fear of losing control or unconsciously wanting to keep student attention on himself.

The supervisor of the trainer can also use the same tool to evaluate a presentation. By noting on either side of the paper the mode of instruction, he will have a more objective analysis of the trainer on which to base discussions.

Any evaluation of trainer performance should always strive for objectivity. Too often trainer critiques produce comments such as . . . That was disrupting . . . or . . . Tapping your pencil causes. . . These comments indicate only negative aspects of performance. The trainer may completely understand all the criticism levied against him, but go away with no positive ammunition as to what he did right. By combining the concept of Delegated versus Directed

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(a 4 Letter Word)

is a film that:

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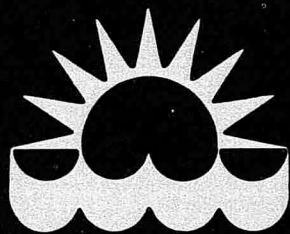
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learning, unsigned evaluations, discussion leading, and video or audio-taped presentations of his sessions, the trainer will have a pretty realistic evaluation of his effectiveness.

Maintaining discipline without destroying the learning environment is one of the greatest challenges of all, and one of the probable fears of most trainers. One approach to prepare trainers for this area is projecting them into situations and forcing them to think of solutions. Identification of the criteria to be used when handling discipline problems is a must. Solving discipline problems should (1) not interfere with the flow of instruction or harm class progress, (2) protect the individual being disciplined, if possible, and (3) be realistic and practical.

Presentation of discipline problems can be complex or simple. Using a sheet of paper, a short incident can be simply described. Analysis of the problem can be done in many ways. Direct questioning of trainers on how they would handle the situation, discussion of various solutions, dividing into small groups for role playing the actual situation are all effective.

Regardless of the solutions that become the product of the group (unless a specific incident is being replayed), no concrete solution is necessary for the trainer to understand the considerations which he should make for discipline problems.

The following is an example of such a problem.

John Smith is very argumentative and he seems to have an opinion about every subject. He tends to be first to answer any question. John is somewhat disturbing to the rest of the class.

What to cover in discipline cannot be specifically identified here, but the suggestion is to do so by answering the question, "How close can the trainer be to put to the actual situation he may face?"

Preparing the trainer to use all audio visual tools and other presentation devices available to him is of obvious importance. This could include the pros and cons of using such non-projected visuals as flash cards, models, chalk boards, flip charts, photographs, magnetic

boards, poster boards, product displays, hook and loop boards and manuals. His instruction would also include the pros and cons of slides, sound on slides, filmstrips, movies, movies with sound, overhead projectors, opaque projectors, cassette tape and reel tape recorders, records and videotape if all are used.

Operation of these devices is important but of more significance is when to use them. Teaching this can include giving presentation situation problem and asking the trainer to choose the presentation device which he feels will best assist the learning process.

The presentation methods section of a train-the-trainer program should also cover presentation devices such as role play, cases, incidents, games, discussion leading and lecture. The most effective way to cover all these devices, of course, is to put the trainer into mock training situations where he is forced to use them. Questioning him on how he felt and what he learned will allow him to empathize on how his students will react to specific presentation devices.

Summary

The most successful training programs have positive attitude molding and self-motivation as objectives. This is due to the accepted fact that the amount absorbed in relation to the amount presented is frustratingly low. And even more disturbing is the knowledge that the amount retained of the amount absorbed is even lower. Therefore, the student must leave the learning environment wanting to know more.

A train-the-trainer program must obviously include technique and skill training. But of greater importance is having him become aware, accept his role of assisting the learning process and recognize that his real function is helping people grow . . . grow to be more valuable to both themselves and the company they work for . . . because of a relationship they had with the trainer.

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