

"WHAT AND HOW WE COMMUNICATE, AND WITH WHOM, MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN HOW WE'RE SEEN, AND RESPECTED."

COMMUNICATING FOR SUCCESS

BY LESLIE W. CROSS

"The two major problems facing HRD practitioners still seem to be: gaining support and respect of top management, and professional development." This quote from editor Mike Cook's "Page Four" column in the January 1980 *Journal* seems quite surprising at first glance. After all, we're entering ASTD's 35th year! Yet, it's really not surprising when you consider how rapidly the Training and Development profession has grown, and how many new people are engaged in this activity. The ASTD national organization and many of its local chapters offer development programs for those entering, or new to the profession; but that's really not enough — it takes more to become an effective and respected "pro" in our field.

In thinking back over my own experience since I started as an instructor in 1946, and about the people I have known and worked with who have become successful, there is one characteristic which applies to all. They are active and

expert communicators with a wide network of contacts. A closer look at their communication activities might be of some help in getting at the two problems mentioned in the introduction. Specifically, let's look at internal communications with management and other training people within the organization, and then examine external communications with HRD people from other organizations, including educators and consultants. Finally let's examine the communication value of professional publications.

Internal Communications

Everyone agrees on the importance of getting management's commitment and support . . . and the "pros" are good at it. Several recent articles in the *Training and Development Journal* cover a number of keys to success. A few points from these articles, which merit careful study, follow:

Bill Scherer in "How To Get Management's Commitment For Training" (January '78) says: "Know your business — know your organization — be on top of all

current events in your company — be one of the best informed individuals on the business your company is in, and you will win a lot of management support for the training you do."

The use of management "steering committees" in identifying needs and planning training actions is described in Scherer's article, and in "How To Design A Management Development Steering Committee" by Richard Headley (June '78), and also in "Planning a Curriculum" by Ray Svenson (October '78).

Jack Phillips suggests ways to communicate effectively with different types of managers to get management support in "How To Improve Management Support for Supervisory Training Programs" (August '78).

There are some good ideas in these articles that have served others well — they could do the same for you.

Internal training networks for sharing ideas and approaches to problems can be most useful in organizations having trainers in units in different locations, such as

several plants. In some organizations the trainers comprise an informal committee with the "chair" rotating among the members. The close working relationship established benefits all, often with needed answers to problems just a phone call away!

External Communications

Our best medium for external communication is membership in ASTD, both local and national. Chapter meetings provide opportunities to learn firsthand from those doing new and interesting work, to participate in workshops and seminars, exchange information, and make contact with other professionals who share our problems and interests. But you have to work at it if you want to get something out of it. The best way to get to know the people who are really doing something is to take on chapter responsibilities — from committee work to chapter leadership. You will find the people you want to know working right along with you, and the contacts you make will be invaluable. Active leadership in a professional organization can increase your stature in the eyes of management and lead to better acceptance of your ideas.

Most successful trainers I know are members of informal training networks established through contacts made in ASTD. They can "plug in" at any time to get help or ideas on a problem. Membership in such a network requires, of course, willingness to share information on what you are doing and to help others.

A good trainer knows consultants who can provide valuable assistance if needed; and he/she knows a lot of them through participation in ASTD. He/she also knows the value communicating with other trainers can be when considering the need for or selecting a consultant.

Experienced trainers know that educators from universities, colleges and vocational schools can help design and implement courses to meet special needs, and trainers can often help educators in designing courses which will better prepare graduates for business. Trainers in most cases need to take the

initiative in setting up these contacts, but the relationship can be mutually rewarding once established.

Professional journals and publications such as the *Training and Development Journal* are excellent communication media for us all. Serious trainers read as many of these resources as possible to keep well informed and further their own development. If you aren't doing so, you are stunting your professional growth, and it will show in your contacts with your management. The most respected and effective professionals in training and development are prolific writers and contributors to the literature of our field. Don't overlook the value that similar contributions from you can have to your own development and professional standing.

In Summary

Those new to the Training and Development profession can find it difficult to get the support and respect of management for themselves and the work they are

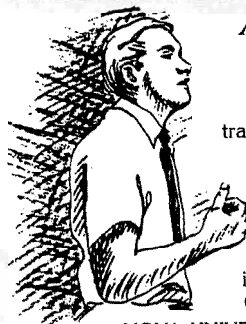
doing. Concern for their own professional development and advancement naturally follows.

What and how we communicate, and with whom, make a big difference in how we're seen and respected. The ideas and suggestions in this article have served well for many respected professionals in the Training and Development field. They are offered in the hope that they will benefit others.

Les Cross retired from Exxon Corp. in February of this year to establish his own business as a management consultant in personnel training and management development. For the past 13 years he has been an executive development and personnel advisor to top corporate functional management in Exxon, assisting management in formulating development plans for managers and in planning replacements for executives in the refining, supply and transportation functions worldwide. His work has involved evaluation of performance and potential for advancement, salary administration for professionals, and executive compensation. He has been a member of ASTD-New York Metropolitan Chapter for 30 years.

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