

In Practice

Cookies and Quality

By Jeffery Marx, director of training and development, and Sherri Kimery, director of quality improvement, Youth Villages, 1341 Sycamore View, Suite 300, Memphis, TN 38134; 901/372-3616.

Our firm launched its total-quality-management initiative with a companywide training session. To encourage staff to participate fully, the training and development staff decided to take advantage of employees' shared sweet tooth.

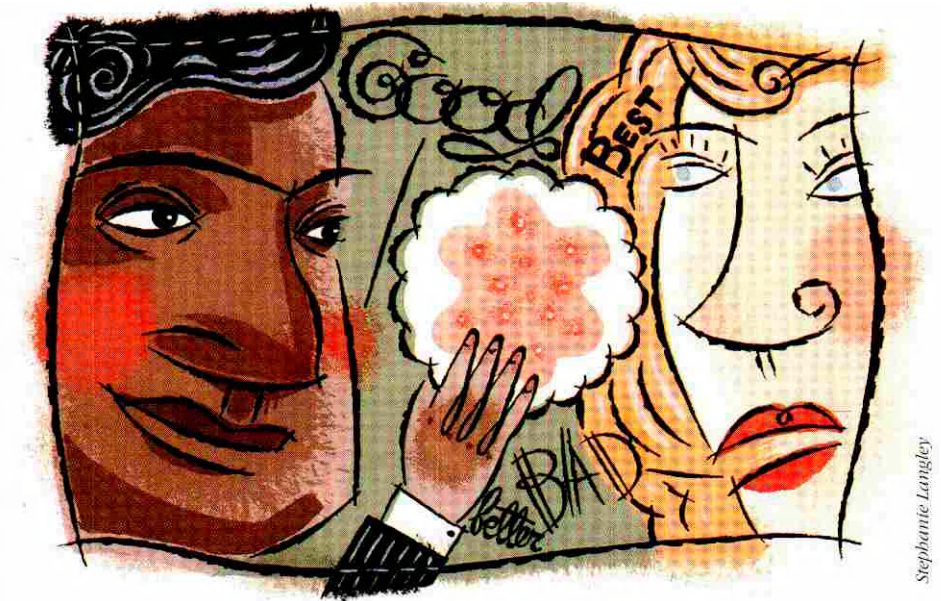
We created the "Cookie Store" as part of the training. We placed six trays of cookies on a table at the front of the classroom. In front of each tray we hung a poster that listed the cost of a cookie from that particular tray (costs ranged from 10 cents to 75 cents per cookie) and the days and times that participants could sample the cookies on that particular tray.

We asked each participant to choose "the quality cookie" from the selection provided based on three indicators: taste, cost, and availability. Then we divided the group into teams and asked each team to rate the cookies and select one as tops in quality.

We tabulated the individual and team responses and created Pareto charts. Because staff were invited to eat cookies throughout the day, we also were able to chart consumption of each kind of cookie.

We found the choices made by both individuals and teams varied widely. Also, every group suggested different indicators of quality. We used the group's activities as a springboard for discussing the need to evaluate products and services from the customer's point of view.

Participants said they appreciated



the hands-on experience. Later, we shared this training strategy with a citywide Quality User's Group in Memphis, Tennessee; several other firms plan to use the technique with their own staffs.

Preparing Trainers Through Hands-On Work

A partnership between the University of Iowa and an insurance business in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, offers practical experience to budding training and development specialists.

As part of their coursework, students who study advanced instructional design with assistant professor Jim Quinn develop employee training programs for Toyota Motor Insurance Services. The 150-employee operation is a processing center for Toyota Motor Sales USA's insurance subsidiary.

During the past three years, Quinn's students have produced nine programs for the company, including

One firm found an innovative way to let employees experience the sweet taste of quality.

booklets, videos, and slide presentations. Students have created programs on listening skills, conflict management, meeting management, and other topics.

Students work in small groups with a member of the TMIS training department to address a particular need identified by the TMIS training staff. Students spend up to 300 hours during a 15-week semester on their projects.

For more information, contact Jim Quinn, assistant professor of psychological and quantitative foundations of education, at the University of Iowa, 319/335-5567.

Advice for the Cyberphobic

Are you "cyberphobic?" If so, you're not alone.

Many people feel intimidated by rapidly multiplying and mutating technologies, says Andrew Denka, executive director of OfficeTeam, an administrative-support staffing firm.

Denka offers the following pointers for conquering cyberphobia:

- ▶ Don't assume you have to navigate the Internet like an expert or learn every new software package. Take a step-by-step approach.
- ▶ Give yourself time to learn. Schedule time on your calendar, arrive early or stay late at the office, or practice at home on your own or a friend's computer.
- ▶ Give yourself permission to experiment and make mistakes.
- ▶ Learn by doing. Use new technologies first to accomplish familiar tasks, and then branch out.
- ▶ Learn from different sources. Read a computer magazine, attend a seminar, invest in a primer, and spend time working with an on-screen tutorial.
- ▶ Find a computer guru to offer you guidance. You probably can find a computer-savvy friend or co-worker to fill this role. Customer-service representatives at computer retail stores also are good resources.
- ▶ Join a users group at work or in your community. Members of users groups help, advise, and support each other.
- ▶ Stay abreast of which technology skills are in demand by reading the classified ads.

Monitor Your Monitor

These suggestions can help you avoid ailments associated with computer monitors.

- ▶ Sit as far back from the monitor as is comfortable for your eyes, usually an arm's length.
- ▶ Turn your monitor off when you're not using it.
- ▶ When monitors are placed together, keep at least four feet of space—and preferably five—between their backs and sides.
- ▶ Invest in a shield to reduce electric field emissions and to discharge static electricity.

(The tips are from the winter 1995 newsletter of the American Society for Training and Development's Instructional Technology Professional Practice Area.)

Translation Services

The American Translators Association publishes the *Translation Services Directory*. The 416-page book profiles nearly 1,300 professional translators who offer interpreting, editing, and proofreading services.

The directory covers 148 areas of specialization and 110 languages. Listings include translators' names, addresses, and telephone numbers; the services that translators provide (interpreting, editing, and proofreading); their education and experience; and the hardware and software they use.

The directory costs \$75. To order, contact ATA, 1800 Diagonal Road, Suite 220, Alexandria, VA 22314; 703/683-6100; fax 703/683-6122.

U.S. Fails To Invest in Human Resources

From day-care centers to workplaces, the United States fails to develop its human resources. As a result, the nation undermines its competitive position in the global marketplace, asserts a report from the Council on Competitiveness.

Human Resources Competitiveness Profile compares the state of human resource development in the United

States to that of other industrialized nations.

The council assembled indicators of well-being that encompass four broad stages of human development and education: family and early childhood development, primary and secondary education, university education, and workplace training.

According to the report, here's how the United States compares with other industrialized nations:

- ▶ The United States has the highest proportion of single-parent families in the industrialized world.
- ▶ Almost three times as many U.S. children live in poverty as children in other leading industrial nations.
- ▶ U.S. 13-year-olds continue to trail their counterparts in other developed nations in science and mathematics test scores.
- ▶ Since the 1980s, the cost of a college degree in the United States has jumped 32 percent for public universities and 55 percent for private institutions.

Because nations vary widely in their policies toward workplace training, comparisons are hard to make, the report acknowledges. Nonetheless, it notes, training continues to gain importance in industrialized nations.

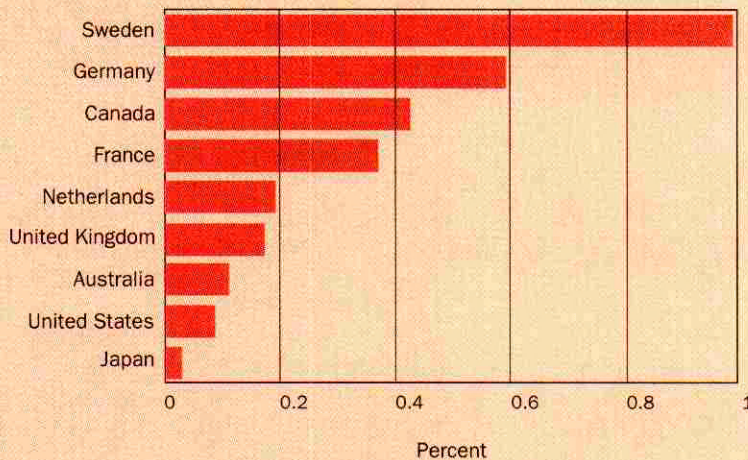
Compared with businesses in Japan, Germany, and France, those in the United States are much less likely to train new employees; they often delay investments in upgrading workers' skills, the report states.

The report also finds that

- ▶ The U.S. government spends less on job training than governments in other countries.
- ▶ In the United States, only 16 percent of workers receive corporate training, and higher-skilled workers receive more training than lower-skilled workers.
- ▶ Japanese workers receive three to five times as much training as U.S. workers do.
- ▶ In the United States, workers who have been with a company longer receive more training than newer employees. In Japan, on the other hand, training levels remain relatively constant throughout a worker's tenure.
- ▶ U.S. high-school graduates receive only a fraction of the training that their counterparts in Europe and Japan receive.

"This [report] should drive home

Public Spending on Training and Placement (as a percentage of gross domestic product)



From *Human Resources Competitiveness Profile*, Council on Competitiveness, 1993.

the need to focus on developing the nation's human resources—its people—to improve our long-term competitiveness and standards of living. We cannot afford to sacrifice anybody," says Dan Burton, president of the council.

The Council on Competitiveness is a private-sector coalition of chief executives from businesses, organized labor, and higher education.

Single copies of the report cost \$15, plus shipping and handling. Call the Council on Competitiveness, 202/682-4292.

Electronic Recruiting

If you want to seek job applicants in cyberspace, you might want a copy of E-Span's free *Guide to Electronic Recruiting*.

- ▶ The guide covers
- ▶ the demographics of on-line employment-service subscribers
- ▶ the benefits of on-line recruiting and reasons to advertise positions on-line
- ▶ answers to frequently asked questions about on-line recruiting
- ▶ a forecast of future trends.

E-Span is a four-year-old on-line employment resource for employers and job-seekers. Services include classified and display ads, on-line job-search assistance, and a resume data base.

Users can gain access to E-Span through several major on-line services, including CompuServe, America Online, GENie, and EXEC-PC, as well as the Internet.

For a copy of the guide or more information, contact E-Span at 800/682-2901; fax 317/469-4508.

Do-It-Yourself Multimedia

Corporate trainers are becoming multimedia do-it-yourselfers. That's one finding from a survey conducted by Omnitech, a Chicago, Illinois, management and marketing consulting firm.

Omnitech interviewed 75 senior-level corporate educators at companies that currently use multimedia education and training. The study defined multimedia education and training as workstation-based learning that involves multiple media, such as text, graphics, video, and audio.

Most firms reported that responsibility for multimedia development rests with the human resources training function. Slightly more than 17 percent of multimedia developers

hold information systems training titles. More than 21 percent of developers are information-system specialists who are not trainers.

The rise of multimedia training also might "herald a new alliance," says Omnitech's Joel D. Krauss, between the training function and the information systems function, "with the crossover expanding the roles and responsibilities of each."

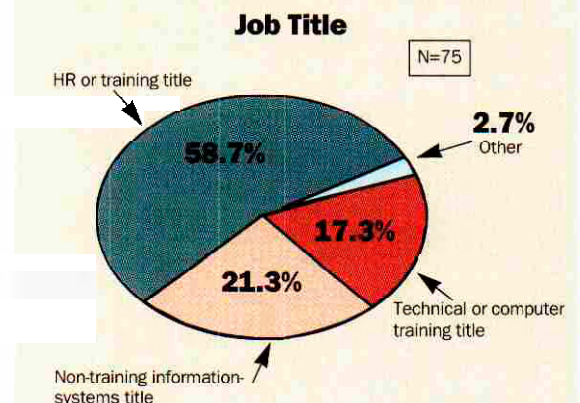
As multimedia products of all kinds multiply, expect to find trainers playing frontline as well as supporting roles in companies, predicts Krauss, who is a principal with the firm.

Companies will need to build training into their products, Krauss says, so firms might add instructional specialists to their traditional rosters of product-development team members. If this trend materializes, it "could vastly open new opportunities for trainers."

The survey also investigated trends in outsourcing multimedia development and identified popular authoring tools.

The survey also asked firms about their interest in developing company-wide graphical user interfaces. GUIs provide a standard look and feel to multimedia training products, says Krauss. (With a GUI, "The 'help' key always is in the same place," he explains.) Among respondents, 36 percent already have a GUI standard in

Responsibility for Multimedia Education and Training



Source: Omnitech



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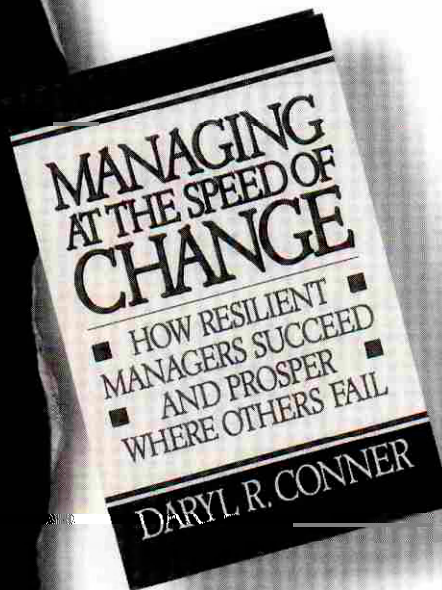
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place to guide development of all multimedia education and training products.

For more information, contact Omnitech, One North Franklin Street, Suite 2000, Chicago, IL 60606; 312/696-0070.

Meditating at Work

Stressed out at work? Consider lobbying senior managers to turn the conference room into a meditation room.

Business consultant Robert Roth advises firms to teach employees transcendental meditation, or TM, and then to encourage them to meditate daily.

Roth, who has lectured about and taught TM for 20 years, points to research that shows that TM helps re-

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duce stress, improve health, and heighten creativity.

He expects more and more firms to see the light. “The pressing need to get a handle on stress and soaring health-care costs is going to radically change the face of the workplace,” Roth says. “Meditating for 20 minutes twice a day on the job will be viewed as a smart move for health, for productivity, and for the bottom line.”

For more information, call Clarence Evjen, 515/472-9221.

This month's “In Practice” was compiled by Erica Gordon Soroan. Send items of interest to “In Practice,” 1640 King Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313-2043.