

Misdirected Concern Apparent in Surveys

After several years in the HRD field I began my review of Lenny Ralphs and Eric Stephan's "HRD in the *Fortune-500*" survey (October 1986) with little enthusiasm. Ho-hum, here's another survey in a field that is already drowning in surveys. Why do we repeatedly ask each other the question: What are you teaching? It is no wonder top management doesn't care about what we teach. They wonder *why* we exist. That is the question we *should* be asking.

The authors had, however, anticipated this reaction, and I was intrigued by their courageous opening: "What would have the greatest impact on human resources development; political, economic, social, or technological issues?" At long last, it looked like we were going to view substance instead of surveying the standard issues.

My interest was also piqued when the survey determined that keeping in touch with the client's needs was the most important issue facing the HRD professional in the next five years. This seemed to suggest that our field finally was coming of age. Instead of being introspective about the kind of training we do, we are starting to think about client needs and what our contributions should be to the business and strategic plans of our organizations.

I was disappointed, however, to note that the subsequent questions were traditional and uninteresting. I longed for questions like: "What are you trying to accomplish with your executive training?" or "Which client needs are trying to be met?" and "How does this fit into the business and strategic plans of the company?" Instead, the survey centered around "who is doing what, training whom?" Never did the survey address the *purpose* of training.

The issue transcends that of how questions are phrased on surveys. It seems that our profession never questions its own being. Is personal growth our goal? Is it increased organizational effectiveness? Or is it training for training's sake?

We will be seen by our organizations as true professionals when we can demonstrate that the "topics" we address in management education programs are ways of accomplishing such specific organizational goals as productivity, revenue, cost reduction, and—most importantly in our current society—quality improvement. Kepner-Tregoe asked plant managers throughout North America what topic was most on their minds; we got back the following: quality, cost reduction, productivity. Training ranked way down the line. It is no wonder there is a split between human resource development professionals and management. We are not yet seeking the same goals.

I look forward to the time these issues are addressed on all surveys. The profession needs more questions such as "What goals have you set out to meet?" and "What are the needs that you are addressing?" and fewer queries like "Who is trying to provide what kind of training to whom?" When I see a survey that reports high concern for reaching business goals, then I'll know that we can stop worrying about being seen as professionals because our contribution will already be well known within our organizations.

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Another Voice on Video

I find that two recent articles on video production offer information with which I disagree, and I would like to take this opportunity to counter them.

In her article, "Great Videos on a Shoestring" (December 1986), author Amy Hartsough states: "Generally, a shoot requires two hours of set up time, two hours of break down time, and travel time." In my opinion, a very complicated shot (lots of location to light, such as the whole floor) might take two hours to set up. I think the word "generally" should be attached to a total set up/break down time of 1½ hours per shoot, with setting up taking twice

as long as breaking down and packing up.

Additionally, in his article, "Choosing a Video Production Company" (December 1986), Bob Risher advocates contacting "10 companies that produce video" before deciding which to choose. This procedure seems totally unrealistic, not to mention time consuming. If you can get recommendations, contact three and make a decision. Speaking to too many people beyond three directors, producers, and account reps will create information overload and all the prices, styles, and personalities will start to meld into a blur of data. If you can't get recommendations, open up the search to a fourth company if you're feeling uneasy.

*Peter R. Schlegler
New York City*

Travel Truths

I enjoyed Leslie Kelly and Diane Kirrane's recent article, "Don't Trip Up When You Travel" (January 1987). For the past 15 years I have devoted more than 125 days each year to travelling. As an experienced veteran I would like to add two very important tips that can be considered "life-savers":

■ Always carry on your person a single copy of any notes or handouts you intend to use. Planes lose luggage, UPS doesn't always deliver on time, and hotels or clients can misplace your valuable materials.

■ Before unpacking, check your room and the hallways for emergency exits in case of fire or other emergencies.

Happy travels!

*Juan F. Gutierrez
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Caveat Emptor

"Beware of those who have the answer to your problem before they have done any fact finding or analysis on their own." This statement by Richard McCullough in "To Make or Buy?" (January 1987) is worth repeating. Those of us who have been around the T&D field for many years

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ISSUES

can forget how difficult it can be for the naive buyer of training programs or consulting services to differentiate form from substance.

The buyer should look for a consultant who remembers that the *initial* phase of project definition is a back-and-forth process requiring productive and realistic problem solving, opportunity analysis, and negotiating. After this, however, a time estimate is still just a highly educated guess based upon the consultant's experiences.

Mr. McCullough makes another relevant point worth repeating:

"In the formal contract, be sure to include amendments: how can the contract be changed if that becomes necessary?" Contracts should include decision points where the agreement can be modified or even terminated when appropriate.

Harold Scharlatt
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Human Resource, Not Spiritual, Development

I was disappointed to see that *Training & Development Journal* is assisting in the promotion of "New Age" thought in HRD. In "Trends in Training" ("In Practice," December 1986) the predictions of The Center for Accelerated Learning were reported, among them, "As the general level of human consciousness continues to evolve in our culture, training in the use of the 'higher self' for improving job performance and satisfaction will become more commonplace." For the sake of the HRD profession, I sincerely hope that this prediction is wrong.

I am alarmed at the increasing use of psychospiritual techniques in human resource development. The aim of these techniques varies from accelerating learning to reducing stress to improving creativity. But the common psychological dynamic of all of these techniques (including meditation, self-hypnosis, biofeedback, est, visualization, and others) is the induction of a trancelike state during which the sub-

ject suspends critical judgement and is more open to the suggestions of the facilitator than would otherwise be the case.

Additionally, with respect to the subject's belief system, many who practice such techniques change their world view to one based on the Eastern view of "monism." This view suggests that all of reality is made of a single universal substance, sometimes called a Universal Consciousness or Over Soul. Because many subjects experience a sense of absorption into a wider consciousness than their own—an experience that is common to many consciousness-altering techniques—they adopt a new belief system that explains or fits with their experience.

On a third level there is another dynamic at work. Many people ascribe to the belief in a spiritual or supernatural realm. Many religious traditions teach their adherents about such a realm, variously inhabited by angels, departed souls, demons, and the like. Since we cannot prove either the existence of such a realm or its nonexistence, we must be very cautious whenever we are dealing with the spiritual dimension of an employee. For if there truly is a spiritual realm, and if we humans are susceptible to influence from such a realm, then teaching our employees to use their "higher self" to improve their performance may, in fact, be introducing them to a form of spiritism, one involving "occult correspondence" where the subject is already in a heightened state of suggestibility because of the trancelike state that is entered.

It's time for the HRD profession to rise above the trendiness of the New Age philosophy and leave to more qualified people the development of spiritual potential. I'm not saying that spiritual development is not important: It is. But I am saying that the methods employees adopt toward developing their spiritual dimension should not be prescribed by their corporation's human resource department.

Richard Watring
Budget Rent A Car Corporation
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[Your concern is duly noted, but remember that reporting a subject is not equivalent to endorsing it. To quote the sentence introduc-

ing the article: "The Center for Accelerated Learning makes these sometimes rosy predictions for training over the next few years . . ." The operative word is "rosy," an adjective that does not imply endorsement. —R.B.]

Tell Us What You Think

Do you think New Age psychotechnologies have a legitimate place in training? Many hold that the development of spiritual potential is vital to the advancement of human resource potential. But Richard Watring's letter in this month's "Issues" indicates that this training trend could spark quite a controversy. We'd like to hear your opinion. Send your viewpoint to "Issues," *Training & Development Journal*, 1630 Duke St., Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.

Correction

The second sentence of Toby Katz's letter ("Issues," February 1987) should read as follows: First of all, lasting accent correction is rarely achieved through repetition of sounds alone; the speaker must be taught the proper position of the mouth, tongue, teeth, and lips for each sound.

"Issues" is compiled and edited by Patricia Fitzgerald. Send your viewpoints to: *Issues*, *Training & Development Journal*, 1630 Duke St., Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.

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