

Reviews by Bill Ellet of
Training Media Review

Encouraging the Heart

Encouraging the Heart, video, 2000, 20 minutes, CRM Learning: 800.421.0833, www.crmfilms.com. Purchase US\$795. Other material: leader guide.

Current research reveals that in addition to money, most people have diverse motivations for working, such as a strong desire for performance recognition. No surprise, additional evidence suggests a gap between employees' needs and management's response.

Why that discord? Some managers feel that pandering to soft skills conjures an image of wall plaques and forced smiles. *Encouraging the Heart* presents facts that can change such opinions.

The video's production is strong, but it could do a better job of selling itself. Experts James Kouzes and Barry Posner deliver key points that are illustrated by documentary footage from a wide array of actual companies, including an aerospace firm, a volunteer organization, a utilities company, and a software developer.

I prefer examples of real organizations with testimony from live people because they're usually more credible and interesting than scripted actors. Though the video doesn't offer in-depth coverage of the companies, the representatives who appear on camera are poised and informative.

The program is built around a seven-point action plan. For example, to dispel the notion that this program is only about touchy-feely techniques, steps 1 and 2 cover how to set clear standards

and expect the best from employees. Kouzes and Posner point out that ambitious goals and lack of feedback do little to increase performance.

The 34-page leader guide offers instructors just enough assistance to deliver a solid program, including helpful background information, facilitation designs, and ready-made forms and handouts. A practical addition would have been a self-study guide for organizations that don't use classroom instruction.

More important, because the training-video market demands brevity, this video eliminates opportunities to explore subtle venues for personal recognition extensively or show how programmed praise can backfire.

Bad Apples

Bad Apples: How to Deal With Difficult Attitudes, video, 2000, 23 minutes, VisionPoint Productions: 800.300.8880, www.vppi.com. Purchase US\$695. Other material: leader guide, participant workbook, and self-study workbook.

Dealing with difficult people is a perennial problem. The supply of know-it-all egotists and chronically cranky individuals often seems endless. Therefore, it's no surprise that there's a multitude of products covering the topic. Standing out from the pack, *Bad Apples* offers some unusual features.

Conventional videos illustrate each idea with a different vignette, but this video explains its five-step protocol by using a series of vignettes to teach the complete process—a total of five times. In my opinion, the repetition will help

viewers learn the process more effectively. The risk is tedium, but the producer tries to avoid it by attacking a different type of problem with each repetition. For example, the first set of clips covers handling know-it-all bosses; the last looks at inattentive employees.

Narration is performed by a professional actor, whose delivery is crisp and convincing. The vignettes are well scripted, acted, and produced. The image and color quality are excellent. The only exception is the handheld camera sequences, causing exaggerated camera shake.

Another unusual and helpful feature is a self-study workbook packed with exercises. Video has long been typecast as a classroom-based product. But in the consumer market, instructional tapes geared toward individual users with topics ranging from personal finance to yoga are commonplace. Self-study, video-based training programs are long overdue. On the downside, the video's self-study workbook is identical to the participant workbook.

The ancillary support materials are more than adequate to get you started on classroom training, extending the video content in important ways. The leader guide has a full range of facilitation materials, although I found some of the cross-references confusing.

Recommendation

Encouraging the Heart is a good video for new managers who need to understand how crucial recognition is to an employee's performance. The program is interesting to watch and edited well. Its price is high, but you get a decent value for the money.

As *Bad Apples* says, dealing with difficult people can be a pain in the backside. It's unavoidable, though, and it's worth exploring ways to make such relationships more constructive. This video has a reasonable approach and teaches the topic more effectively than other programs.

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	<i>Encouraging the Heart</i>	<i>Bad Apples: How to Deal With Difficult Attitudes</i>
Holds viewer interest	★★★	★★★★1/2
Acting/Presenting	★★★★1/2	★★★★
Diversity	★★★★1/2	★★★★
Production quality	★★★★1/2	★★★★
Value of content	★★★★★	★★★★
Instructional value	★★★★1/2	★★★★1/2
Value for the money	★★★	★★★★
Overall rating	★★★★1/2	★★★★