BOOKS

GUEST
BOOK
REVIEW

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TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS DIRECTORY

By Paul Wasserman and Marlene A. Palmer

You are sitting in your office on a quiet morning. Your phone interrupts the quiet. A client (internal or external) has a problem. You meet with the client. Using your best analytical technique, you determine that his/her problem is a training problem. Next you decide that you don't want to or are unable to tackle the problem or you just want someone to talk to about the problem. Where do you turn for assistance? You can (1) call a colleague, (2) call ASTD for a referral, and/or (3) refer to the *Training and Development Organizations Directory*.

The *Training and Development Organizations Directory* will tell you who's-doing-what in continuing education and training for supervisors, managers, and executives in management/supervisory skills, communications, data processing, finance, health, international enterprises and operations, job analysis, marketing, office management and procedures, personnel management, public administration, science and technology, systems, technical skills, and over 600 other subjects.

About half of the 600-page directory is devoted to a detailed, factual description of 985 organizations, graduate schools, universities, colleges, consulting firms, government agencies, etc., that offer programs in continuing education for managers and executives. A typical entry provides these essential facts about an organization: name, address, phone number, principals, staff, areas of special course emphasis, typical clients or target audience, and year founded. It also provides a description of the organization

and its course offerings. Typical fees and actual course titles are often given in the detailed entries.

The remainder of the *Directory* is composed of four indexes which offer an alternative to the alphabetical listing for locating a helping hand or someone to talk to. The five sections of the *Directory* are:

Section I — Training and Development Organizations is the main component of the book. In this section, training and development organizations are arranged alphabetically and are described in serially numbered entries.

Section II — Geographic Index of Organizations arranges the training and development organizations by state and city.

Section III — Broad Subject Index of Organizations by Location organizes the training and development organizations under the broad topical areas in which their courses are offered. Under each broad subject the arrangement of organizations is then geographic by state and city.

Section IV — Subject Index offers a very comprehensive and analytical subject approach to the fields in which training and development efforts are carried out. Each organization is cited by entry number under every heading in the subject index which applies to the organization's work.

Section V — Alphabetical Index of Individuals is a listing of the personnel who manage or offer the training efforts in each of the training and development organizations

included in the volume. Following each name is the entry number for the individual's organization.

Three questions have come to mind while using and reading the *Directory*. First, who's not in the *Directory* and does it really make any difference? Second, how quickly will the *Directory* be outdated? Third, how good is your own resource file?

For myself the answers to the three questions indicate that the *Directory* will be very useful to us. First, there are enough diverse organizations which seem to be fairly evenly distributed across the country so that the organizations which are missing may not be missed. Second, while some staff change and some organizations have short lives, there are enough organizations in the *Directory* that have been in existence for a while to indicate that the *Directory* will not quickly go out of date.

The third question is an interesting one for us since we have been trying to maintain a resource file to provide training resources to Iowa state and local government. I find that the *Directory* covers a much wider selection of the programs and providers than our collection of materials gleaned from brochures mailed to us. For the $45 cost you receive an efficient one-volume resource file of who's-doing-what in management training and development in the United States and Canada.

The only caution I have for purchasers of the *Directory* is an obvious one. Since the content of the book was provided by the organizations themselves the information is only as good as the organizations submitted. But it is
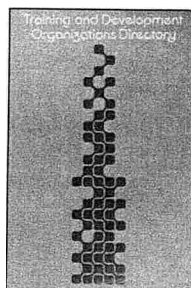
definitely a good starting place to find someone to talk with about a subject or to find someone to help you in a training or development program. — *Michael Cavitt*

GUEST BOOK REVIEW

BY ROBERT E. SCOTT
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ADULT LEARNING — PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND APPLICATIONS

By Michael J.A. Howe (Ed.)

This text attempts to examine the more important processes and applications in the field of adult learning that should occur throughout life in both formal and informal educational establishments. The author endeavors to link theory and applied research in the learning processes and individual differences as they are related to the problems of the acquisition of new skills and learned abilities in a dynamic, demanding and ever-changing society.

Howe has pulled together the collective writings of 14 knowledgeable English university professors of psychology. They indicate that learning takes numerous and varied forms, and the topics covered in the text are quite diverse. The reader will find recent research into learning and its application to a broad sample of learning that are encountered in normal adult living.

Howe indicates that individuals differ enormously in their ability to learn. Although systematic differences between people in a range of learned abilities are rather easy to demonstrate, the investigation of individual differences in adult learning is beset with serious difficulties. A major problem is that only rarely is it possible to equate differences in the observed capacities with any simple learning process. A wide variety of additional factors contribute to measured performance in most true-life learning situations. For instance, motivational influences, listening and reading abilities, perserverance, fatigue. attentional variables, and perhaps most important, previous learning may each contribute to determining level of performance on tasks ostensibly designed to assess one's ability to learn.

Because the text is a combined effort of many individuals, the transition from one topic to the next is not smooth. Also, some readers may have some difficulties with the non-American phraseology or the "foreign" spelling of some words. However, once the reader adjusts to these minor problems, a wealth of new information is presented and discussed in a very usable form.

The text is divided into three parts. The first covers human learning in adulthood. The discussion on "Skill and Error in Everyday Life" is excellent. The same could be said of "Learning Social Skills." The article on "Personality & Learning" is also good although the rationale for using factor analysis is being questioned by many experts. Even if the results of factor analysis are untrustworthy, the factors examined are bound to provide sufficient merit for examinations to justify their use.

The middle portion of the text deals with the "Acquisition of Knowledge." Unquestionably, this section is the most difficult to read and understand due to its theoretical base. Several experimental investigations are cited as well as some practical strategies for enhancing memory.

The third section of the book is by far the best. It covers "Learning and Modern Society." The explanation on Industrial Training is superior. The task analyses and the critical incident approach are treated in some detail. The evaluation stage of conducting on-the-job training is somewhat brief but several excellent reference resources are provided for additional study. There are also some hints on how to best select individuals for training. The discussion is somewhat abbreviated but does provide some needed guidance. The topic on retraining the older worker offers some promise but not much more. This subject certainly deserves and will require some additional study. The article on "Learning to Cope with Atypical Forces Environments" appears to be much too theoretical for immediate application by most training directors. However, the article on "Instructional Layout and Design" has a wealth of valuable information on arranging content on the printed page in order to facilitate expedient learning.

The book concludes with a good review of the Open University and other newer approaches to adult learning. Several problems are denoted but, at the present time, the solution appears to be very elusive. The text is concise but not a comprehensive general overview of research into human learning. This book should be on the reference shelf of most business and industrial trainers. — *Robert E. Scott*