

"THE SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNOR WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN CREATING THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT AND COMMITMENT FOR MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISORY DEVELOPMENT."

# MANAGEMENT TRAINING IN IOWA STATE GOVERNMENT

BY J. MICHAEL CAVITT

In a 1974 policy statement, *Training and Development for State Employees*, Governor Robert D. Ray of Iowa said: "I want you to know that I support an increased effort throughout state government to build management and employees' capabilities to perform their duties and prepare them to assume new or extended duties."

At that time, there were only two interdepartmental courses available. They were conducted by the Institute of Public Affairs at The University of Iowa, and both were for supervisory personnel. Today, the Governor's Policy Committee on Employee Training and Development and the Institute of Public Affairs jointly sponsor 13 seminars and workshops for managers and supervisors, and five for nonmanagement employees.

How is it possible in a state government without a personnel or training department to be able to have a comprehensive, coordinated approach to management and supervisory development? Is there

something that can be used from the Iowa experience in other state governments? There seem to be five major aspects of the Iowa situation which have contributed to its ongoing success:

1. the support of the Governor;
2. an advisory committee of department heads and other top government officials;
3. an outside resource group to give technical and professional input and perform staff work;
4. a needs-identification procedure which identifies priority training needs;
5. a follow-up procedure for consultative assistance to managers and supervisors who participated in the training.

## Governor's Support

The support of the Governor was instrumental in creating the right environment and commitment for management and supervisory training and development. In addition to his policy statement in 1974, another major action by the Governor was to attend a two-day management development workshop in March, 1975. As a re-

sult of attending the workshop, he decided to have his top 400 managers attend the same workshop after it had been adapted to Iowa state government. The Governor also insured that his executive assistant worked on and with his Policy Committee on Employee Training and Development. This gave the Committee the support of the Governor as well as access to him for his ideas and to share their ideas.

A second factor was the Governor's Policy Committee on Employee Training and Development. It was first organized in 1974 and was composed of a number of representatives from large and small departments, the state treasurer, the comptroller, the Governor's executive assistant, and the director of the Institute of Public Affairs. The Committee was reorganized in 1976 to also include the state employee relations director, the director of the Merit Employment Department, and the executive secretary of the Regents system.

The Committee was important because it had input and support

from the Governor's office, the comptroller's office, and other departments. Also, most decisions or recommendations from the Policy Committee were acceptable to and supported by the Governor. The Policy Committee evolved into a committee which planned and coordinated interdepartmental management and supervisory training and development as well as the designed and implemented major programs like the results-oriented performance-appraisal system.

A third factor was the involvement and support of the Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Iowa. The consulting/training section at the Institute was organized and funded by the University to provide management and supervisory consulting and training support for state and local government. The Policy Committee was able to work closely with the Institute for staff assistance. (All interdepartmental management and supervisory training programs are conducted by the Institute's staff.)

### Effective Need Surveys

The fourth aspect of the activities in Iowa involved two comprehensive and effective need surveys . . . one in 1972 conducted by the Institute of Public Affairs and the other in 1974 conducted jointly by the U.S. Civil Service Commission and the Institute of Public Affairs.

The 1972 survey consisted primarily of the following:

1. A review of the policies, practices and programs of 13 states which are acknowledged as having made considerable progress in employee development and training.

2. Interviews with major department heads and personnel officers concerning their current programs, training needs, their need for assistance in training and employee development, and attitudes toward this part of management's responsibilities.

3. A questionnaire on the same kinds of topics answered by most state departments and state institutions.

4. Determination of overall needs (gaps) in what is now being done in preparation of a plan for a more effective state governmentwide approach to employee development and training, with goals and specific targets provided as guidelines for the next several years.<sup>1</sup>

The 1974 survey was developed by the U.S. Civil Service Commission, St. Louis Regional Training Center and sought to combine two different approaches to surveying training needs of managers. The first was the evaluation and recording of personal needs of the individual manager as measured against past performance. The second was to define functional performance requirements of a given managerial position and to forecast individual needs against these requirements.

"The backbone of the study is a 39-item survey instrument, completed by 297 managers, enabling each manager to indicate his or her personal perspective on training needs against a framework of 39 tasks/role statements encompassing the spectrum of management functions. Specifically, respondents were asked to check one value, high, medium or low, for each of the following statements:

1. The importance of this task/role to overall effectiveness is my position.

2. I anticipate this task/role will increase in importance in the near future.

3. Given the present and future demands of my position, it is important that I increase my knowledge, skills and abilities to perform this task/role."<sup>2</sup>

Based on the data collected from these surveys, appropriate training was selected. By January 1978, courses consisted of:

- Three courses primarily for upper management — a basic skills course, a communications course, and a decision-making course.

- Three basic courses for supervisors — a basic skills course, a communications course, and a labor-relations course.

- Seven training modules covering time management, discipline, interviewing skills, meeting leading, skills for workshop leaders, on-the-job training, and management skills for women.

- Four courses for clerical secretarial personnel consisting of a two-part communications course and two courses dealing with the employee, their viewpoint of themselves and their relationship to the organization.

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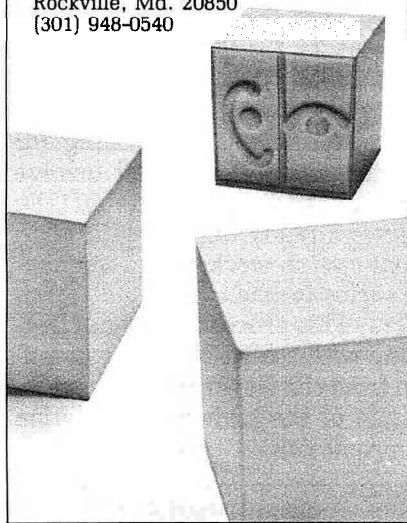
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