

# SPEAKING FROM EXPERIENCE

## THE 'I TAUGHT THAT ON TUESDAY' SYNDROME

Guest Commentary  
BY RICHARD C. GARDNER

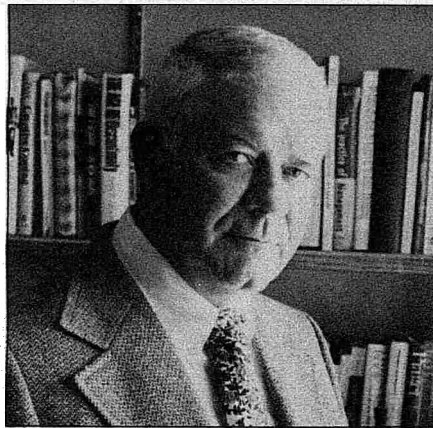
*"I taught that on Tuesday! I don't know whether they learned it or not!"*

There are many steps an instructor must take to become a professional in training that involves human-relations skills. One of the biggest steps bridges the gap between teaching subject matter, and teaching people. Because this step is usually spontaneous, rather than planned, it may be taken at any point in a training career. As a result we have many young professionals; and, too many old amateurs.

This is not to say amateurs don't do a good job. Many of them play to packed houses and always give good performances. They've studied hard and learned to act the part. But they don't relish having a performance interrupted. When a suddenly aroused student, who has lain dormant for an hour, or a day, jumps ahead to point five while the amateur instructor is just ready to launch into point three, the performer says, "Hold it. That's a good point but you're getting ahead of me. Have patience."

No matter how smoothly it's handled, the student will not interrupt again, and the performance may now go on unblemished, while learning flounders.

The professional is more interested in the heretofore quiescent student than in performance. The pro might even lie a little. "Say, that's a point I hadn't thought about! Let's develop it!" Now the student has been rewarded for a



valuable contribution, and learning is enhanced. The professional lives the part.

Professional and amateur alike may have extensive knowledge of both content and process, the what and the how. Both may acquire knowledge of sound, achievable, observable and measurable objectives. The amateur may admit that knowledge of students is a definite asset, but shrug it off as a luxury often unavailable. The professional will seek out general knowledge of human awareness and understanding *because* knowledge of a specific group of students is sometimes unavailable.

When we speak of the various knowledges, there is one the professional considers indispensable, which the amateur places in the "nice to know, but . . ." category, the knowledge of learning. Reaffirmation of logic, using simple words that "any fool" could understand, doesn't succeed too well with a student who already understands the cognitive message, but whose feelings prevent its accep-

tance.

The professional has the ability and the confidence to shut up long enough for learning to take place. I've watched an inexperienced golf instructor achieve outstanding results with a difficult student in 20 minutes — and then lose everything that had been gained because the student had paid for a 30-minute lesson.

Instructors keep talking for other reasons: a particularly bright or interested student; one or two dull or unresponsive students; uncertainty as to one's effectiveness; or, fear of questions one may not be able to answer.

A professional teacher senses when students have stopped learning. That doesn't mean dismiss the class. It simply says it's time for a change.

If, as has been stated, teaching people rather than teaching course material is the biggest step, then respect must be the life force of the professional trainer. Not the respect one must earn from student or sponsor, but the respect a trainer must feel and display for student or sponsor. For their problems as well as for their successes. Respect for the problems of others is the mark of the true professional in any field. Ridicule and contempt are the amateurs' cop out. Their escape. It's relatively easy to discover and point out errors in procedure or judgment. It's more difficult to support and analyze with an eye toward improvement.

There are other distinguishing

characteristics that shout, "I'm an amateur!", or whisper, "I'm a professional!"

### The Amateur

Jumps to conclusions  
Gets by  
Needs external control  
Is rigid  
Is malleable  
Encourages dependence  
Quotes "experts"

### The Professional

Jumps to questions  
Achieves  
Has self-control  
Is consistent  
Is flexible  
Encourages independence  
Is one

The lists could go on and on but there's no need.

One idea that will occur to some of you is that the amateur seems to spend a lot of time fighting the system. The professional accepts the system, limitations and all, and tries to work within it and improve it.

Abraham Maslow took the positive approach. He subscribed to the idea that there isn't a whole lot you can do to improve the big system, the world. But he believed we can all improve the several small systems of which we are part, and in so doing, we cannot avoid improving the big system.

The opposite is equally true. When one fights the system, even with best intentions, one risks making a bad situation worse. Worse for oneself and for all other components of the system. And every time a small system is adversely affected the effect carries over into all it touches.

How does an amateur go about becoming a professional? If you're personally concerned about your status you've just taken the first step. — *Richard C. Gardner*

Richard C. Gardner has been with the FAA Management School at the University of Oklahoma since its inception in 1971. He has 15 years of management experience with major aerospace companies including five years in personnel administration and management training for the Boeing Company, prime contractor on the Apollo/Saturn V program. He holds the Ph.D. in communication and HRD.

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How to manage change before change starts managing your organization

Mushrooming technology, a changing business environment, and rising employee expectations catch many companies painfully ill-prepared to adapt. Change overtakes and overwhelms them. As a result, they struggle into the future



dragging their people along, prodding them with authority and structure when what really motivates them is influence and cooperation.

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The key is behavior — mainly, *yours*

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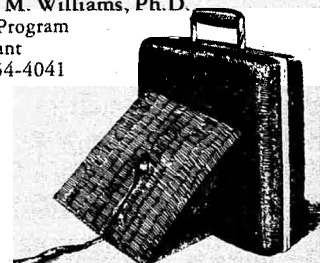
The MSOD program is 18 months long and requires minimum time away from work. The first year, you attend six in-residence sessions, one every other month. The first is two weeks, the rest are one week. The final six months you spend back home working on your master's project.

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David R. Peters, Ph.D.  
Program Director  
(213) 971-7533

Patrick M. Williams, Ph.D.  
Special Program  
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(408) 354-4041



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