Training Is a System

putting the success odds in your favor

George Kent

If you've ever sat at your desk unhappily evaluating a "bust" training program, you will probably agree that something went wrong! You still don't know why this particular program went bad while the previous program was a success. It may be that you or your department hasn't produced a system which will put the success odds in your favor.

Your problem may even go deeper than the control factors. Do you know what the training function in your company designed to do? Does your superior really know? If you were asked to define training in 15 words or less, could you do it?

What Is Training?

Let's look at the results of a

held last November. Of the 26 people in the class, four could not condense their definition into such a short span. Twenty-two gave us a definition which defined the training function; not one defined "training." What, then, is training?

Our gut definition is: "Training is a method whereby you make or save a buck for your employer." It's that simple! This being the case, you should also understand that the training department is an overhead factor which has a dollar value placed on its function. If at the end of any given year the dollar value received is less than the dollars expended, you're out of business or at least in trouble! This is where a solid system comes into play, one that makes you move in "Training the Trainer" session the proper direction and also will

assure you the most for each dollar spent.

Base System

Our particular system is divided into 11 subsystems as follows:

- 1. Definition system of company structure: This is done to evaluate who does what and who has what authority.
- 2. Structuring system of company functions: What is done and why.
- 3. A needs assessment system based on company function.
- 4. Priorities of needs system: This is where we most often err. What a trainer sees as a top priority is not always the same as the person with the authority. This is why we make a very careful study of the company structure. We must know top management's

feelings as to priorities.

5. System for packaging needs into salable items: Not every manager will give you carte blanche when it comes to training. You have to sell your ideas and approaches. (If you can say, "This will save the company X number of dollars," that is something that most managers understand and agree to.)

6. System for setting goals and objectives to meet the priority needs: Get approval from the proper authority. If the design is in the sales area, get the sales manager involved. If you're talking line training, involve the production or plant manager, etc.

7. Evaluation system for your publics: This is one of the most important aspects of your game plan. You can't overtrain or undertrain. Give them what they need and that's all.

8. Set up critical path system for your course of action: This is the control system which can make or break your future planning. (More about this aspect later.)

9. System for laying out course of action [curriculum and course of study] to meet the goals and objectives: Be sure you have the approval of the proper authority. This takes the monkey off your back. Never allow yourself to get boxed into a situation where you're the "fall guy."

10. System for administration of program: This includes pretesting and posttesting. If you have done your homework when you set up the critical path you should have no problems.

11. Evaluation system of program results: This is difficult in some areas, but with a little ingenuity it can be done. Attach a dollar value wherever possible. If you can show that a particular program netted a 10 per cent cut in production costs which equals X number of dollars you're in business. You can equate this to time, also. Let's assume your program saved someone 30 minutes a day. Put it in dollars and you're a hero!

Now that you have a base system, don't think your work is over. Number 1, 2, 3 and 7 should be reevaluated at least once a year, preferably once each six months. Management hierarchy can fluctuate faster than anything else, so

can their philosophies.

In working with some 2,000 companies, I have found that the weakest area of planning is in subsystem No. 8. Most managers don't understand that the program you are working out for their department is one of many that are going on concurrently. In fact, many trainers are unaware that they need some type of control system to cover all their bases. Generally, they are so busy working out an individual program that they forget what else they are required to do. Hence, many spend needless hours working at home.

Building a System

Building a system is rather simple: All you have to do is write down all of the procedures you do when you undertake building a program. Once you're sure you have all your steps, put them in proper sequence, starting with the first item and continuing to the last. As you work on the path you will learn that some programs will not require all the steps in the path while others will need all of them. There may be a time when you find that there are more steps required than you have on your chart — revise your chart. If you lay out your path properly you will be able to have as many programs on the chart as you required. Our suggestion is detailed in Figure 1.

You will note that step No. 1 has been listed as well as the final four. In the eight years that our system has been in use we found that there are times when two or three columns for miscellaneous can be handy. Also, the addition of a remarks space allows us to note important thoughts which might be overlooked should the program be repeated at a later date.

"Plan To Use It"

Now that you have built your

Figure 1. **STEPS** etc. -REMARKS system, plan to use it! It comes in handy to plan your next week's calendar, allows you to pace your work and at times prove to your superiors that you cannot handle any more projects without some outside help. Check off the steps as you complete them and you'll always know where you are and where you're going.

George Kent is the director of education, research and technical services for the Allied Construction Employers Association. He is a member of the American Society for Training and Development as well as past Chairman of the ASTD Construction Division special interest group. He presently represents ASTD on the National Metric Conversion Council. He is also active in the Wisconsin Chapter, acting as the Region V Conference Chairman, Having just finished a tour of duty on the Advisory Board for the Insurance and Banking Committee of the State Assembly, he is presently waiting for the Governor's confirmation to the Construction Inspection Fee Commission. Also, he is acting as an evening division instructor on communication and management studies at the Milwaukee School of Engineering and recently was added as a guest lecturer to the University of Wisconsin, Department of Continuing Education.

ASTD Regional Conferences Set

The 1975 ASTD Regional Conferences are shaping up to be "better than ever before!" The following is a capsulated wrap-up of each Region's scheduled plan of events:

Region 1

Mark Oct. 5-8 on your calendar and plan to attend the 1975 ASTD Region 1 Conference, scheduled to be held at the Jug End Inn, South Egremont, Mass.

Training professionals such as George Odiorne, University of Massachusetts; Ben Miller, St. John's University; Scott Parry, Training House; and Dorothy Sarnoff, Dorothy Sarnoff Speech & Communication Services, will conduct conference sessions.

Also included on the list of program speakers are: Don Kirkpatrick, 1975 ASTD president; Kevin O'Sullivan, ASTD executive vice president; and Jan Margolis, member of the ASTD Board of Directors.

The Conference will be a "Multilevel Approach For the Training and Development Team," which includes executive trainers. front line trainers, OD specialists. etc. Participants will be able to 10 Inns in the United States and find out how to design programs their restaurant has twice been sethat will satisfy them, how to sell lected number one in the country those programs to management — so don't miss this excellent fa-

and how to evaluate the worth of the programs.

For additional Conference information, please contact: John M. O'Shea, manager, Manpower Development Division, West Chemical Products, 46-16 West St., Long Island, NY 11101.

Region 3

The Holiday Inn in Perrysburg, Ohio will be the location for the 1975 ASTD Region 3 Conference. to be held Nov. 5-7.

This year's Conference, designated a "Challenge Of Change," will feature a three track program: Track I for relatively new trainers; Track II for people in non-profit service organizations; and Track III for experienced trainers.

Topics to be highlighted include: needs analysis, instructional design, adult education, learning, team building, OD, role negotiation and several special interest group sessions. Participants will also be treated to a tgour of the Dana Corp. headquarters and their "Dana University" approach to training.

The Perrysburg Holiday Inn has twice been chosen as one of the top

cility.

Anyone wishing to register for or exhibit at the Conference should contact: Clyde Hoag, training supervisor, Champion Spark Plug, P.O. Box 910, Toledo, OH 43661.

Region 4

"Tune In To New Directions In Employee Development" is the theme of the 1975 ASTD Region 4 Conference, scheduled for Oct. 9-11 at the Hyatt Regency in Nashville, Tenn.

Ted Mills, director of the National Quality Of Work Center, Washington, DC and member of the National Commission On Productivity and Work Quality ('73) will give the keynote address, "The Trainer's Challenge: Productivity and Results.'

Also featured as a general session speaker will be Dugan Laird, well-known training consultant and author, Decatur, Ga. He will inform participants on "How To Achieve Excellence In Training and Development."

And that's not all! Also featured on the program are: Jan Margolis, Martin Broadwell, Kevin O'Sullivan, the president of a large corporation and a surprise guest — Don't miss this one!

For additional Conference information, please contact: Donald J. [Continued on page 23]