

Letter to the Editor

"MANAGEMENT TRAINING" COROLLARY

Dear Sir:

In his article "Management Training: Where Has it Gone Wrong?" (December 1971 *Journal*), Wallace Wohlking posed the question – "Is structural change more effective than attitude change in producing behavior change?" Having offered an extensive and critical review of traditional management training methods the writer then continued by suggesting the use of a new order of things – structural change – without defining this in relation to its corporate or managerial application.

The purpose of this letter is to add a corollary to the closing statements of Wohlking, and by doing so both support his hypothesis and propose a definition of "structural change."

There would seem to be two ways of considering "structure." One way is to take the word literally and think in terms of Corporate Structure (the Organization Chart) or Job Structure. This can be termed *Extrinsic Structure*.

The other alternative could be to consider how a man perceives his role in the organization; his understanding of his job, etc., which could be termed *Intrinsic Structure*.

From a training position it is virtually impossible to change Extrinsic Structure, and even if it were possible it would usually be quite untenable, from a Corporate viewpoint. In the short-term, therefore, it is virtually both impossible and impracticable to change Extrinsic Structure. (Long-term the situation could be different in that one of the Corporate Goals may well be to change Corporate Structure.)

The "Trainer" – whoever he may be – is then left with the Intrinsic Structure, and it is in this area that short-term change can be attempted, with a resulting attitude and behavior change.

Attitudes are only partial determinants of behavior. Behavior is affected by many factors including opinions – which in many instances are formed in ignorance of facts or adequate data.

Whilst we are not able, in the short-term, to change the physical organizational constraints operating on people, we can attempt to relieve (and possibly remove) the source of their cognitive dissonance (and negative attitude) by education.

By assisting such people to –

- (a) re-perceive and comprehend the constraints place on them, and the reasons for those constraints; and
- (b) understand their total role within those constraints, we will begin a conceptual change on the part of the people concerned. Since this change would be concerned with an attitude initially based on a minimum of experience (or inadequate data) and in no way concerned with changing the "core personality" there is a good chance of success.

To summarize, whilst the trainer can do little in this short-term to change the physical organizational constraints (Extrinsic Structure) within which people work, an attempt can be made to induce a conceptual change (Intrinsic Structure) which may well result in an attitudinal and behavioral change more consistent with their real organizational role.

The definitions of structural change suggested in this letter are based on observation made whilst conducting a management training program with a middle management primary group in the retail industry.

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