

Women Who Break into Top Management: A Study

Fourteen years ago, Stephanie was avidly recruited by several prestigious investment firms following her graduation with honors from the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. Her meteoric rise through the middle management ranks of the two corporations she has worked with attests to her leadership and technical competence. Yet, for the last two years, she has become discouraged and disillusioned. Now at the top of the middle-management plateau, she has tried but failed to break through the barrier to upper-management positions—while watching two of her male colleagues' promotions to policy-making offices.

Like thousands of other ambitious female managers, Stephanie may never be asked to join the minuscule 2 percent of senior management personnel who are women. U.S. Department of Labor statistics show that only 8 percent of this country's major companies have two or more women on their boards of directors, and there is only one female chief executive officer of a *Fortune*-500 corporation.

To help the Stephanies of the corporate world, Norma Jean Anderson and Mario D. Fantini, professor of organizational development and dean, respectively, of the University of Massachusetts School of Education in Amherst, are leading a team to design a study to identify systems in corporate structures that lead to increased career opportunities for women. Their project, "Corporate Linkage Model Development Program," brings Anderson and her staff together with officers of the nation's leading manufacturing/high-technology, financial, and entertainment/communications industries in roundtable discussions to identify strategies to accelerate the movement of women into positions of corporate power and authority. Representatives of the Labor Department will also participate.

The roundtable discussions, held in Boston, Hartford, San Francisco, New York, New Orleans, and Los Angeles beginning last summer, set out to

develop a model program that reflects both the differences among types of corporations as well as regional differences related to the advancement of women in management. Anderson says "a set of guidelines will be created for corporations to use to support activities and steps to help women move up the corporate ladder."

Anderson, chairman of the board of the National Training Laboratories, and her staff are part of a specialized program at the university that researches interpersonal and group dynamics, multicultural and cross-cultural dynamics, and training and development systems of organizations. They hope their research will have an impact on women's understanding of the complex functioning of the workplace and on women's ability to use or change existing organizational structures.

For more information, call Paula A. Nowick at 413/545-0233.

Swearing Is Good Medicine When the Axe Falls

You're fired. . . . Now what?

You can start by dealing with emotions that range from shock to rage. And the most constructive way to grapple with the situation, says career advisor Michael Scanlon, begins with *SWEARING*. "After venting your anger and frustration at losing your job," recommends Scanlon, a senior consultant with Goodrich & Sherwood Company in New York, "end your litany of four-letter words and begin the real business—*SWEAR*." (The acronym defines five common-sense elements that Scanlon says will help newly unemployed people regain control and dissipate stress that interferes with the job search.) "When the road ahead seems unclear," he says, "you have to focus on these five steps: Schedule, Work, Exercise, Activity, and Reflection."

Start by planning a daily schedule, he suggests, to ensure a balanced daily life. Next, focus on work. Scanlon notes that "just because you're out of a job doesn't mean you can't work. You should devote at least eight hours each day to identifying new opportunities and defining new goals."

Regular aerobic exercise, he advises, is widely recognized as an effective way to manage and reduce stress. And, Scanlon encourages job hunters to plan regular recreational activities to maintain proper perspective. The final element—reflection—is perhaps the most important because it supplies, he says, "the strength, guidance, and inspiration needed to weather the storm."

Couple the above five steps with enthusiasm and timing, and a job seeker can begin the healing process after the job loss and generate the required motivation to get that new job.

Employee Handbooks: Asset or Liability?

The recent trend among state courts of treating employer policy statements and employee handbooks as binding contracts has sounded an alarm for American employers long accustomed to the employment-at-will doctrine. In response, a number of labor relations professionals are advising employers and clients to avoid using employee handbooks altogether.

But, says John Coombe, a Denver attorney, the erosion of that doctrine should not deter employers from publishing such handbooks and policy statements. "Employee handbooks," he explains, "continue to have beneficial personnel management aspects that easily outweigh any hazards arising from their legal implications."

In a recent *Employee Relations Law Journal* article (Summer 1986), Coombe cites the overriding value of employee handbooks as vehicles for improving company image, communicating a labor relations philosophy, and establishing rules and problem-solving procedures. He says that "a well-drafted and effective employee handbook can become a powerful tool for communicating the employer's attitudes and expectations about the employment relationship." Coombe points to two principles in maintaining an effective handbook. First, the statements in the handbook should be easy for both employer and employee to live with, and second, the employer should never attempt to bend or break any handbook rule.

Coombe reviews practical steps employers can take to minimize the risk

of successful challenge based on handbook language: eliminate phrases that could be subject to wide-ranging interpretation and include disclaimer language stating clearly to employees that the handbook is not a contractual agreement.

He also recommends a yearly review of the handbook contents to eliminate outdated or currently inapplicable rules: "A wise investment in preventive labor relations."

For more information, write or call *Employee Relations Law Journal*, 22 West 21st Street, New York, NY 10010-6904; 212/645-7880.

Hot Careers for Women

In their July issue, the business editors of *Working Woman* magazine identified the following 25 careers as high-growth fields for women:

- Hospital administrator
- Health-maintenance organization administrator
- Accountant
- Home-entertainment marketer
- High-tech information officer
- Systems analyst
- Restaurant manager
- Financial planner
- Financial public relations executive
- Direct-marketing manager
- Fund-raiser
- High-tech cost accountant
- Corporate wellness director
- High-tech customer-support manager
- Retail buyer
- Commercial banker
- Nurse consultant
- **Human resources manager**
- Pharmaceutical marketer
- Telecommunications manager or consultant
- Design engineer
- High-tech traffic manager
- Commercial real estate agent
- High-tech financial analyst
- Sports marketer

HRD for the Disabled

You've seen their collection boxes in shopping malls and supermarkets, but the main mission of Goodwill Industries is to provide rehabilitation services, vocational training, and job place-

ment for adults with handicaps ranging from mild retardation to severe physical impediments. One recent Goodwill computer training course—with a startling 85 percent job placement rate—is a good example of how they get that little-known job done.

The story of this program illustrates a successful merger of public and private efforts to create training that benefits the community.

In 1981, Goodwill, with the help of IBM, began research into the possibility of creating computer programmer training courses by surveying the state of the job market in the northern New Jersey area. In addition to help from a local business advisory council, the U.S. Department of Education kicked in a \$1 million grant to set up the program.

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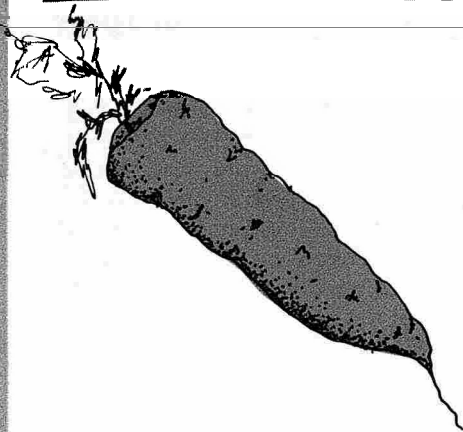
stage, the council and instructor Jim Grabill wanted to simulate a typical work environment by complementing hands-on training with supplemental training materials. Their solution was to secure training materials from Advanced Systems, Incorporated, of Arlington, Illinois, a multinational training and skills-transfer company that subsequently donated 100 hours of instructional videotapes. ASI materials are designed to train personnel in information processing, end-user computing, manufacturing and engineering, and human resource development.

Doreen Cevasco, senior vice president of Goodwill Industries of New Jersey, Inc., describes the completed program as "an intensive 10-month schedule divided into an 8-month classroom sequence and a 2-month externship program. The classroom sessions include practice in building computer programs. ASI training materials provide the basic concepts as well as exercises and tests." According to Cevasco, an increase in community awareness is the only way to ensure constant interaction with the business community and the success of the Goodwill program. "Unfortunately," she explains, "the disabled people who could benefit most from these programs either do not hear about us or do not have access to the organizations we work with.

"To continue moving in the right direction, we need more assistance from companies like ASI... to help the disabled live more self-sufficient and productive lives."

Carrot (No Stick) Diplomacy

A new training initiative has been undertaken by the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID). Called the Central and Latin American Scholarship Program (CLASP), its purpose is to sponsor training in the United States for almost 10,000 individuals from Latin America and the Caribbean over the next five years. Candidates will be selected for academic studies, mostly at the undergraduate level, as well as for short-term technical training in development priority areas.



Consequently, institutions offering rich social and cultural experiences, cost sharing, and appropriate academic and technical training will be given preference for inclusion in the directory and will be more likely to receive candidates. The first edition is already out, but the second is planned for February 1987. For more information, contact Laurel Elmer, Training Specialist, Creative Associates, Inc., 3201 New Mexico Ave. NW, Suite 207, Washington, DC 20009.

Substance Abuse: As Inevitable as Death and Taxes?

With no visible effect on the problem, testing for drug abuse has become a national spectator sport. *Washington Post* columnist Haynes Johnson recently noted the tragic ironies of the federal-level war on drugs: "The facts are that the nation's attempt to combat a genuine problem in drug use among Americans has been a singular failure, understaffed and underfunded. From the president down, the people lining up to give urine samples for drug testing have been unwilling to pay the price of a real antidrug campaign. In fact, they have cut funding for such efforts.

"Now, in splendid example of political hypocrisy, they propose to make the public believe that they are 'doing something' by targeting not the drug smugglers but some of the very people charged with catching the criminals. It is government workers who are to be tested, not the potential drug importers."

This kind of government impotence in the face of pandemic drug abuse (and alcohol must be included in this category) is one reason why American corporations are hard-pressed to find ways to combat the problem among their workers. But business isn't finding the problem any more soluble than government has. "Despite the high visibility of the issue, an apparent consensus of concern, and a generally agreed-upon need for action," notes Helen Axel, director of the Conference Board's Work and Family Information Center, "the proposed 'solutions' for

Creative Associates, Inc., a Washington, D.C., firm, has been contracted to develop a directory of training opportunities for the program that will be used for placing candidates in appropriate long-term, short-term, and English-language training programs in the United States. Creative Associates is currently surveying academic and technical training opportunities and is interested in hearing from organizations with appropriate program offerings that would like to sponsor training for CLASP participants.

CLASP aims to reach special segments of the population with less opportunity to study abroad, including socially and economically disadvantaged groups, women, and racial minorities. In addition to providing candidates with leadership and technical skills necessary for development goals, the program promotes lasting bonds of friendship and mutual understanding among peoples of the Americas. To meet this second objective, candidates will be encouraged to participate in a variety of intercultural experiences while in the U.S.

Special attention in the directory will be given to training institutions and programs that involve candidates in American social and cultural life on a continuing basis—especially in the areas of family and community life, local government and politics, local business, and recreation activities. Training costs are a factor, so many institutions and firms that have already shown interest have expressed their willingness to use innovative ways to reduce the costs of this program such as tuition remission, fee reduction, package rates for group placement, and the use of volunteer-student groups to provide services.



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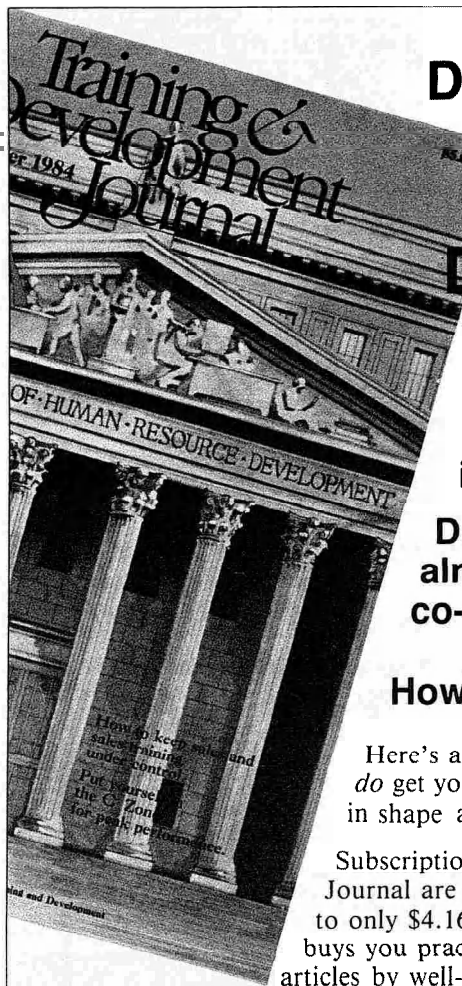
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controlling alcohol and drug problems are far from universally endorsed—indeed, some are highly controversial."

In "Corporate Strategies for Controlling Drug Abuse," a recent Conference Board report, Axel writes that, "Much of the current debate on how to deal with substance abuse among employees centers on balancing efforts to create a 'drug-free' workplace with programs that attempt to restore alcohol and drug abusers to the productive work force. In the process, employers are questioning the efficacy of their responses and the legal limits of their responsibilities."

Agreeing that there is a problem may be the first step, but the nature of the beast makes even the definition of the problem difficult. For her part, Axel admits, "There is little doubt that the proliferation of the availability and use of addictive chemicals at the workplace has complicated corporate efforts to deal with the problem. Although statistics are far from complete, the evidence suggests that the presence and use of all kinds of psychoactive substances in industry are considerably greater than reported.

"In addition, incomplete knowledge about the chemistry of drug dependency, as well as various legal and moral issues concerning drug use and possession, may affect the success of company counseling and treatment programs that are traditionally designed to deal with alcohol problems."

Bringing an impressive array of experts to the task, the report makes an honest attempt at defining the problem—both for employer and employee—and suggesting solutions. Although the success of employee assistance programs in this area varies from company to company, enough case histories are presented—and enough medical evidence marshalled—to suggest that the problem can be licked when a sincere (and often costly) effort is made. It should be obvious to all by now that ignoring the problem is likely to exacerbate it.

To obtain a copy of this extremely valuable resource, call the Conference Board toll-free for report No. 883 at 800/US-BOARD.

"In Practice" is edited and written by Robert Bove. Send items of interest to: In Practice, Training & Development Journal, 1630 Duke St., Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.