

CONFERENCE CRUISE

*a new departure
in training*

Waves churning and foaming off the bow of a sleek cruise ship; three people relaxing in deck chairs in the midst of an earnest discussion; as the first rays of sun hit the deck, a group of six gathered in a cozy booth of one of the ship's bars — *this is professional management training?*

On this unique occasion, the T.S.S. Olympia was the site for not only some different management training, but the occasion for some very sophisticated learning.

Last spring, Miss Dorothy Taylor, Educational Design Specialist for Girl Scouts of the USA, decided that experienced administrative personnel in local councils and on national staff needed a different, more challenging opportunity for professional development. After an unbelievable number of logistical and mechanical problems were solved, 54 students, six consultants, and 16 guests sailed from New York City early in 1969, for ten days of study, discussion, fun, and frustration.

TOPIC SELECTION

Students chose from three general areas of management-related topics: "Current Management" with Dr. Bernard M. Bass, the University of Rochester, resource consultant; "Youth Today" with Miss Joan McEniry, National Girl Scout Program Department; and "Team Productivity" with John R. Rohrbough, San Diego State College. Also available were three Girl Scout staff personnel, Dorothy Taylor, Cecilia Fagan, and Rena Schaefer, who served as consultants with individuals and small groups, particularly in helping participants relate general management information and case studies to Girl Scout situations.

The arrangements and sessions were informal; each group determined its own direction and program, choosing subject areas, methods, and meeting times; how the resources of the library of books, films and video tape would be used; how and when consultants would be involved. Individuals also had the option of whether they chose to work in

groups, or pursue study alone.

ENTHUSIASM FOR LEARNING

The result was a fascinating mixture of group cooperation and individual decisions, of productive discussion and occasional frustrating floundering, of startlingly revealing and honest self-analysis, of better understanding of and appreciation for the group process, of practical experience in problem-solving, and of free-wheeling flights in the realm of theory.

The serious business of study, research, discussion and sharing of findings was rewardingly interspersed with time for the usual fun and frivolity of ship-board living, plus three beautiful days in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. On the return trip to New York, and in spite of some rough weather, the high level of interest and involvement was maintained and even increased. There seemed to be a frenzied fervor to resolve problems, clarify thinking, reach conclusions and develop direction for future study and application before the trip ended.

ACADEMIC CREDIT

An "extra," for those who chose to do it, was the opportunity offered by San Diego State College to earn academic credit for the experience. This represented a real innovation in adult education, since there were no grades, or finals, only the determination by the students that they had learned!

Another educational bonus was an opportunity in San Juan, provided by members of the local Girl Scout Council, to develop a better understanding of Puerto Ricans. For each five participants, one or two local hostesses conducted a tour of the city, sharing their knowledge of how people lived, of their economic and political opportunities and problems, and of community and educational concerns.

COMPARABLE COSTS

Despite top-notch accommodations, service, food and consultants excelling

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most terra firma conference facilities, the cost was comparable to that for the usual training event held at a large motel or resort conference center. Although this type of facility would also adapt to the usual genre of structured, lecture-type presentations, for this kind of real,

needs-based, problem-oriented adult education, the added dimension of an excitingly different locale served as a catalyst to encourage free thinking and acceptance of new ideas and techniques without the usual hang-ups of the status quo. This unique trip combined the

business of learning and pleasure, at a moderate cost, resulting in a fantastic experience few participants are likely to forget. Future programs of this nature are already being planned by the Girl Scouts.

It looks like the girls have done it again!

TRAINING PROGRAMS NEED UPGRADING, BNA STUDY SHOWS

Despite increasing emphasis on training programs for employees, nearly three-tenths of companies that formally evaluate their programs find them deficient, and almost half of those lacking formal evaluations nevertheless point to weaknesses. New techniques are required. Old methods need improvement. Special considerations must be given to the training of hard-core unemployed.

These are among the just-published findings of a survey of executives constituting the Personnel Policies Forum, conducted by The Bureau of National Affairs (BNA), a Washington, D.C. firm. More than 200 representative personnel and industrial relations executives participate in the Forum, representing firms divided about 60-40 between larger companies (1,000 or more employees) and smaller companies.

TRAINING TRENDS

A comparison of the 1969 survey results with those obtained in a similar 1962 survey suggests significant developments in training policies and practices and reveals some interesting differences between the procedures of larger and smaller firms. Staff personnel, outside consultants, and programmed learning are all playing larger roles as training programs become more formalized. On the other hand, the need for retraining programs for those displaced by automation appears to have leveled out.

STAFF PERSONNEL

While all companies surveyed indicate heavy reliance on first-line managers for actual instruction, the use of staff personnel for this function — with or without line assistance — has climbed from 10 percent of the companies surveyed in 1962 to 51 percent in 1969. Larger companies are mainly responsible for this increase, using staff services for training by better than two to one over smaller firms.

OUTSIDE CONSULTANTS

A greater frequency in the use of outside consultants or specialists for employee training is noted. Almost six-tenths of the 1969 participants reported using outsiders — up significantly from 1962, when only one-third reported their use. Educational institutions — universities, high schools, trade schools, etc. — are the primary source of outside help, especially for smaller companies. Larger firms are turning more to professional consultants, increasing their use fivefold since 1962. For all companies, management development is the most common area of instruction for which these outside specialists are being used.

PROGRAMMED LEARNING

There is wider acceptance of programmed learning today. Nearly one-third of the contributors indicate using it, up from under one-tenth in 1962. Similar