

TRAINING TODAY

By

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WE WENT THROUGH two cycles of training in the field of business and industry during World Wars I and II and are now in a third cycle. To meet the needs of war production it was necessary to increase output, expand plants, establish new ones, develop new techniques and expand research. In each of these fields, training of employees played an important part. During World War II, nearly everyone in industry received some training. Yet in spite of it, a year or two after the war, we found a great let-up in training activities.

I once conducted a safety training program in a certain plant and at the end of the first three months the total lost-time days per month due to accidents fell to ten. Then the program was dropped and six months later they were running at over seventy-five lost-time days per month in the same group. This is an indication of the slippage that can take place when training is let go. It is not true that training is the whole story, but it is an important part. If you take away this part the entire program may fall flat on its face. Training is one of the kingpins of any such program.

The training director should be qualified to do the actual training himself, but he should do as little of it as possible. The bulk of the training should be done by the line people involved. It is the training director's job to see that the line people are qualified to do the training. The director who does the training himself is in the same situation as the supervisor who does productive work and so doesn't do his supervising. A training director isn't earning his money unless he sits back and plans and directs the line group in training.

What are some of the things a training director should know? He should know how to teach others to teach; he should be interested in more than just the problems of training; he should be interested in every phase of the company's activity; and he should be thoroughly familiar with the organization and the people in it.

If a training director is working in an organization that is not well set up, he should concentrate on training at the executive level. To do effective executive or management training he must have a full knowledge of the organization's needs. The best training

program will not be effective if people do not feel it is hitting at particular problems. Training directors need to know and understand people and to do this they need to understand the basic psychological principles underlying human behavior.

If you are going to start a training program, then develop one that will fit all areas where training is needed in your company. Most large organizations separate their training into four types, namely—Production, Sales, Executive Development and Safety. The average training director may know how to operate in one or perhaps two of these areas, but who is to do the rest? Does this mean that you, the training director, should have no interest in the others? As I have already said, you have a mistaken idea if you think you must do all the training yourself. Include these areas in your over-all plan. It is the training director's job to see that the best qualified people working in the line do the actual teaching.

Decide early whether the training job you have to do has a continuous need or whether the need is only temporary. If there is a continuous need, a method must be developed to keep it going. Effective training requires a variety of people from both within and without a company. Supervisors get tired of seeing the same person up in front of them all the time. The more people you having doing the training, the easier the job will be. In most companies there are those who enjoy the job of training, but it is often necessary to teach them how to do it. Let them know for sure that you want them to be teachers, give them all possible aid and you

will be surprised at the interest they will show in developing the personnel in their own department.

Supervisory and safety training needs are continuous. Skill training may be more temporary. Executive training is a constant need in most companies.

Areas of responsibility must be developed for employees in each level of management. After basic training for an assignment the person should be able to operate his job without constant reference to his supervisor for advice and directions. He should proceed to carry out his work and advise his supervisor of his accomplishments. Certainly, he will make some mistakes but being made at a lower level of management, they will not be as important as if they were made at higher levels. These mistakes, followed up by proper counsel, help in the development of the employee. Assigning areas of responsibility to the lower levels of management relieves the higher echelons of many miscellaneous problems, thus giving the training director more time to spend on larger problems and to explore new fields.

Every man must have one boss only. Every man must know the limits of his own job and must keep his boss advised. When a superior doesn't know of the decisions being made by those directly under him, he will always be in hot water.

All business organizations have a definite responsibility in the selection and development of the younger management group. Many large organizations today are looking for qualified young men for top management assignments

which indicates that there is a definite shortage in this group. Is not this because these managements have neglected to train people already in their company for these top management jobs.

Directors of training in business and industry are expected to know methods and techniques. The training director should know when to use the lecture method, when to use panel discussions, when to use role playing, etc. All of these techniques and others have their place and the training director should be most interested in those that give the participants the greatest opportunity to take part. These are the best means of changing human behavior, attitudes and habits. We will see more and more role playing used as a teaching technique when employees are allowed to take parts with which they are familiar.

An important item in all businesses is their "communication system." The term communication system is used here to mean the flow and coordination of information between levels of management and between different departments on the same level. The efficient operation of a communication system reflects upon the morals and efficiency of the organization. A training director can help establish and maintain a good communication system by seeing to it that employees are taught the elements of communication skills.

Most training directors worry about how to evaluate their training program. Top management usually wants it evaluated in terms of dollars and cents. The minute you start evaluating a training program in dollars and cents your program will begin to lose its effectiveness

because a program that is run with this goal as its chief end is not the program that will produce the best results in the long run. Instead of thinking in terms of dollars and cents, top management should be thinking of modifying behavior, habits and attitudes.

By way of summary let me say that any training that is given must have the full acceptance by the people to whom it is given. A course that is "shoved down their throats" is often times more detrimental than no training at all. A training director should look around to see where and what the training needs are now and where such needs will be in the long range program. Use line organization people to assist in the training program and supplement with outside help from the community where necessary. By developing more good trainers who will train within the organization the training director will be able to spend more time thinking of his company's needs and planning to take care of them. A soundly built training program will survive; a hit-or-miss deal will soon drop by the wayside.

When making up your budget for next year, remember to include attendance at the 8th Annual ASTD National Conference to be held at the French Lick Springs Hotel, French Lick, Indiana, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, March 12, 13 and 14, 1952. Special rates will be available ranging from \$8.00 to \$12.00 per person per day . . . American Plan.