



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Forrest R. Belcher

THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US

ASTD's 25th year is now history. The year 1970 marks the beginning of ASTD's next 25 — and I strongly suspect the next quarter century will hardly resemble the last one.

As the 70's begin, the challenges facing training men, though not overwhelming, are truly formidable. Our expertise, or at least what should be our expertise, is becoming increasingly important in our organizations and in our society — a society in which future employees will view the world in a different light.

As speakers have said at the last two Conferences, in the 60's the training man is needed and wanted. In the 70's, the expert training man should be indispensable to the smooth and successful operation of any organization.

Many of the issues, problems, and crises facing us today have tremendous relevance to the field of human growth and development. Society in general, and we training men in particular, have only scratched the surface of dynamic human potential. The raw material is there, and the needs are immense!

THE CHALLENGE IN OUR ORGANIZATIONS

The main thrust of our efforts remains the training of employees to high competency in their jobs and motivating them toward commitment to the basic goals of the organization.

We must more than ever stress to managers and supervisors the critical importance of their communication responsibilities with employees. Supervisors and managers are coping with rapid change and complexity in their organizations; these changes must be made relevant to their employees who today tend to be skeptical, critical, questioning, and open in their responses.

Past management practices will definitely not suffice tomorrow. (They hardly do today.) As an NICB report points out, "Management is no longer essentially 'keeping the store.' Today it is much more the process of continuous, planned innovation, the adaptation of the

organization to changed conditions, and the motivation of employees at all levels to reach new goals. This requires not only more managers but usually a different type of manager."

THE CHALLENGE IN OUR PROFESSION

More than ever before we need to know the utmost about ourselves and about our profession. Who are we? How did we get there? Where are we going?

We will be required to back our judgments and our beliefs with solid research, and I should hope that ASTD itself could make additional funds available for this purpose as well as proposing concrete research projects for chapters to consider. We need to do more to improve the image of our profession with other groups. And this image improvement must be more than a slick public relations effort. It needs to be an image that is anchored on measurable achievement and outstanding contribution. Certainly, inside our own organizations, we should do all we can to build our image as helpful and practical experts.

THE CHALLENGE IN OUR NATION

Our nation today is strained by discontented youth, by the struggle of blacks and other minority group members to achieve long overdue economic and social goals, and by the turmoil in our growing, changing cities.

To do our job as well as we can, we need a continuing awareness of our world and its problems. We need to bring our expertise to bear on these broad problems of the environment, particularly in our own communities, and wherever possible suggest approaches for correcting and controlling them.

Can we meet these urgent demands of our organizations, our profession, and our society? If we choose, we can rest secure in the cozy, compatible environment of our own organization, direct ourselves only to the first challenge, and close our eyes to the other inter-related challenges. We can say simply, "Let us

cultivate our (private) garden.”

We can stand aside and do nothing. And what happens then? Perhaps we can find the clue from a story Don Fabun* tells in *The Dynamics of Change*:

Early one morning in 1906, a cow stood minding her own business somewhere between the main barn

*Fabun, Don, *The Dynamics of Change*, Prentice-Hall, 1967.

and the milking shed on the old Shafter Ranch in California. Suddenly the earth shook, the skies trembled, and when it was over, only a bit of her tail showed above ground.

“The Shafter cow,” writes Fabun, “is a sort of symbol of our times. She stood quietly enough, thinking such gentle thoughts as cows are likely to have, while huge forces built up all around her and all at once in a great movement, swallowed her up.”

Our challenge as training experts — or

so-called experts, perhaps, since we assume responsibility for a function that is far from being an exact science — is to provide information and help so that those we train can exercise control over the forces in their environment. Our organizations, our profession, and our nation desperately need the kind of skills we claim we possess.

The need is great. The challenge is ours.

MANAGEMENT STYLES VARY IN FOREIGN CULTURES

The American businessman sent overseas to manage his company's foreign office may run into a barrage of problems resulting from cultural differences between countries, according to a study reported at a recent University of Rochester Symposium on the Task-Oriented Manager.

“Our findings raise questions about the wisdom of exporting our own conceptions of management to foreign countries,” said Edward Ryterband, who co-authored the paper with Gerald Barrett. Barrett and Ryterband are research associates at Rochester's Management Research Center which specializes in cross-cultural research.

The study involved nine countries, and focused on the questions: What character traits do managers in different cultures consider important for managerial success? Do they prefer coercive or permissive management style? Do they prefer passive or involved subordinates?

For example, the successful top manager in Spain is seen as being sharp-witted, imaginative, and resourceful. In Switzerland it is more important to be cultured, responsible, and self-controlled, while in India the most desirable traits are fair-mindedness, imagination, and maturity.

Conversely, in India, sharp-wittedness and logic are among the least important traits. In Denmark imagination and thoughtfulness are considered relatively unimportant, while the Spanish executive need not worry about being modest, careful, or tolerant.

Similar discrepancies were noted from country to country in terms of what it takes to become a successful middle manager or foreman.

On the question of permissive vs. coercive management style, Spanish, Belgian, Norwegian, Danish, Indian, and British executives favor a permissive approach, while the Swiss favor the coercive style, and the Greeks favor neither one over the other.

With the exceptions of Greece, Denmark, and India, all of the countries favor involved over passive subordinates.

What can be drawn from this data?

“We feel that our findings raise very serious implications for multi-national corporations that wish to operate in cultures where organizational goals are conceived differently,” said Dr. Barrett.

“Many such corporations have followed the practice of sending managers from the home office to be ‘resident aliens’ in a foreign country. Often these managers bring with them practices and attitudes that run counter to the host country's norms, creating an unpleasant situation for everyone involved.

“No immediate answer to this dilemma is in sight. Special training in the cultural norms of the host country may be of some help, but established habits are hard to change, even through training.

“In time, with the growth of international business and through better communications between managers from different countries, cultural differences may be lessened and greater understanding between countries may be possible.”