

The Indiana Jones School of Instruction

Three trainers trekked deep into the rainforests of New Guinea to conduct a course in group instruction techniques. Did they get out alive? Read on.

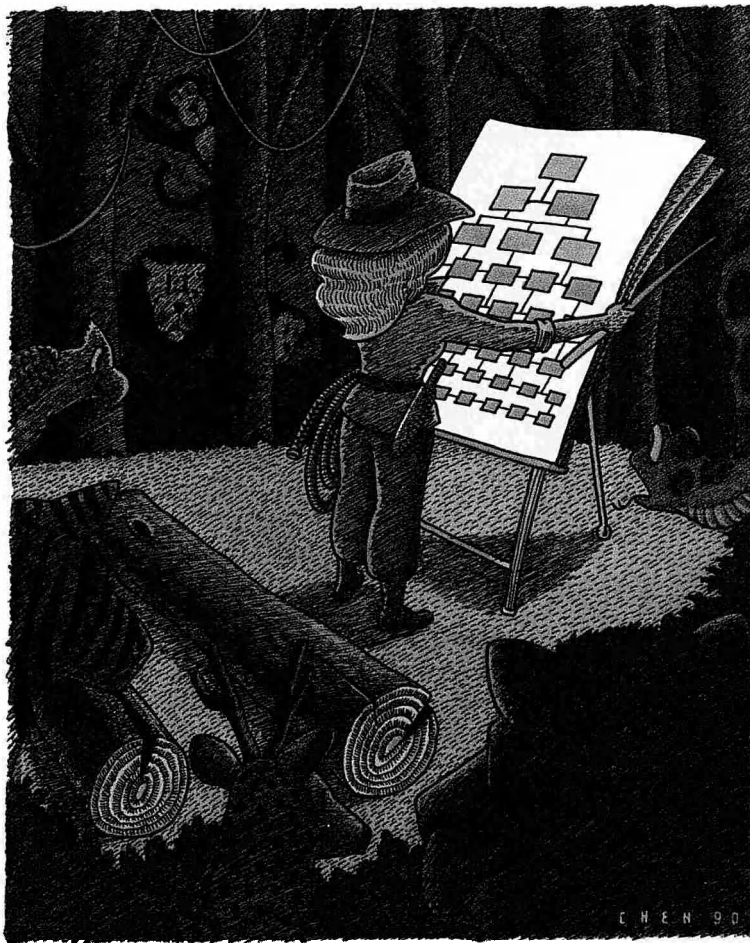
Picture Tabubil, a small mining town deep in the rainforests of Papua New Guinea's Western Province. To this remote site went three intrepid trainers from Training Services Australia to teach group instruction techniques to 19 employees of Ok Tedi Mining Ltd.

Ok Tedi is a copper and gold mine, the second largest in Papua New Guinea, employing some 1,700 people. It is situated at Mount Fubilan in the Star Mountains, about 8 kilometers from the Indonesian border. Before the mine was established, this was one of the world's most remote areas.

Tabubil is certainly isolated. You can get there by light plane or helicopter, or brave the truck convoys on the one and only road, which leads about 100 kilometers to Kiunga, a river port on the Fly River.

Inevitably the mine has had an enormous impact on the local people.

Tate is a training consultant with Training Services Australia, 39 Wellington Street, Windsor, Victoria, 3181, Australia.



By Woty Tate

Until it was built, they lived undisturbed and unaffected by the rest of the world. But it was they who built the road through the jungle to the mine and the town of Tabubil.

The mining company signed a contract with the national government to employ Papua New Guineans as quickly as possible. Therefore, there is a continual training and recruitment program to replace expatriate employees. In addition, the company has a special commitment to give local people preferential treatment.

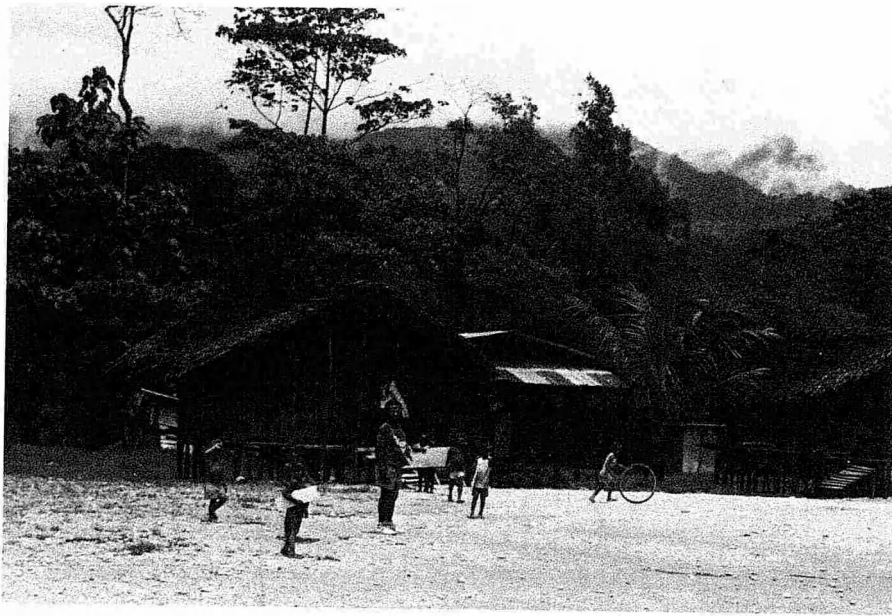
The local people live in small, isolated villages along the only road out of Tabubil. They live mainly by hunting small animals and birds with bows and arrows, and by planting taro, yams, and bananas in small, jungle gardens.

Because of their isolation, many villagers have not had the opportunity to attend school. This puts them at a disadvantage when seeking employment with the mining company, but special programs and

scholarships help them complete their education and training at the mining company's expense.

The town of Tabubil

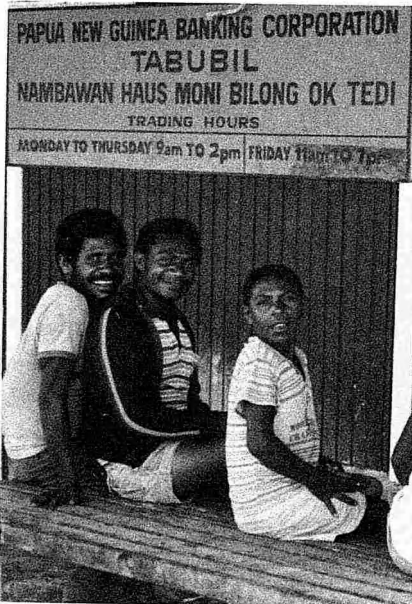
Tabubil was built in the early 1970s, 10 kilometers or so from the mine. It is a typical mining town with a shopping



Papua New Guinean villages such as Bultem were once isolated and unaffected by the rest of the world. Now the villages flank the only road to the mine; local people are given preference for jobs with the mining company. ▲

Tabubil residents speak English, Pidgin, Motu, and various local languages. The translation on the sign is in Pidgin. ►

The Ok Tedi copper and gold mine is in the Star Mountains of Papua New Guinea, 8 kilometers from the Indonesian border. The hole in the upper right used to be a mountain. ▼



center, playing fields, and a nine-hole golf course. Most houses are built on tall stilts to let air circulate beneath them. To start a garden, all you need to do is lay down some top soil, put in a seedling or a cutting, and sit back and watch it run rampant. Grass is cut with a machete, lawn mowers being too expensive to import. It rains 8 meters a year in Tabubil.

The town's official population is about 5,000, but nearby villagers come to town in search of work and better opportunities for themselves and their children. This has caused some social problems for Tabubil as well as the villages.

The mining operation's impact on the environment is another potentially contentious issue. So far, rela-



tions between local landowners and the company have been good because of the economic benefits the mine has brought to the area. About 30 locally owned companies in the area enjoy a combined annual income of about 25 million Australian dollars.

An extensive environmental study commissioned by the mining company showed that the high level of sediment produced by the mining operations would have an impact down the Ok Tedi River and thus the Fly River system. The study found that the impact was manageable, but the national government has said that if the level of sediment becomes unacceptable, the mine will be closed.

Bearing that in mind, and the fact that there had been a riot and a strike

in August 1988, the three of us came to Tabubil with some apprehension. After all, the area had been famous for head hunters, and I don't mean executive recruiters.

Our little plane scaled the jungle slopes admirably and landed at Tabubil International Airport, called "international" because Indonesian planes land there, too. The training superintendent welcomed us and provided us with a van, the transportation of choice in this area.

The mining company provided us with all the comforts of modern jungle living, including TV, which brought us programs from all over the world by satellite, as well as the local Tabubil programs. At night we dined at the Cloudlands Hotel.

Facing some difficulties

Despite the excellent facilities, we did face some problems normally not encountered at home.

Some problems were partly due to the nature of the group instruction course. Its main objective is to make presenters capable of writing and conducting skill and information sessions. It achieves this by a mixture of theory sessions and simulations. Each participant has to write and present a 20-minute skill session and a 20-minute information session, as well as two 40-minute practice sessions, of either skill or information.

For these practice sessions, the large group is divided into "syndicates." Each syndicate member presents his or her session to the small group, with one of the trainers observing. The session is then critiqued by the syndicate and the observer, using video. The criteria for evaluation are the presenter's use of session notes, structure, principles of adult learning, questioning, feedback, and visual aids.

Experiential training techniques, discussion leading, communication, and trainer/trainee relations are introduced at a basic level.

Our team included two people with whom I had never worked—one from the Canberra National Office and one from the Sydney Group. None of us had ever been to New Guinea, and we needed some time to get used to the climate, the people, the facilities, and each other.

We worked from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., which together with the humid climate and the stomach troubles

brought on by malaria pills, was a strain.

The course participants spoke at least three languages: English, Pidgin, and Motu, as well as three or four of their own languages. Accents and intonations made even English hard to understand, especially with the air conditioning running. Likewise, the trainees often had trouble understanding us. As so much of the course depends on effective listening and communication, this was not an easy problem to overcome.

Tips for training in weird and wonderful places

In spite of the difficulties we faced, everything turned out fine, and we are pleased to be able to offer eight points of advice to trainers who are lucky

topic for her skill session. We thought this was a good idea, not knowing that betel nut chewing is definitely not encouraged by the mining company.

Similarly, we were not aware of the mandatory lunch hour 11:45 to 12:45, and we had written our program with lunch breaks between 1 and 2 p.m. That meant we had to do some quick reshuffling of sessions.

Inform participants about the course. We found that some participants expected to be learning about supervisory techniques and problem solving as well as group-instruction techniques.

Along with objectives and course duration and content, all participants should receive information on the following:

- a list of course participants

The course participants spoke at least three languages: English, Pidgin, and Motu, as well as three or four of their own languages

enough to travel as training consultants to very remote places. Some of these tips apply to consulting in general, while others apply specifically to trainer training.

Get properly acclimatized. Travel to a remote place takes a lot out of you. We first had to get to Cairns, a trip of about 3,000 kilometers. From there a ten-seater plane, departing at 6 a.m., took us another 2,000 kilometers to Tabubil, arriving just two days before the start of the course.

As we were not familiar with the country, the people, or the mining environment, we felt that three full days to acclimatize and get oriented would have helped us overcome some of our unease and awkwardness on the first day.

Get to know the workplace, especially company rules and regulations. For instance, one of our trainees suggested betel nut preparation as a

■ a clear outline of what is expected of the participants; for instance, to prepare and present four sessions and to be videotaped and critiqued, preferably on a topic related to each participant's work area

■ a certificate to be awarded on class participation, quality of practice sessions, and recall of theory.

Make sure that participants will be able to use the training. Engaging overseas consultants usually is an expensive exercise, so a special effort should be made to ensure that the benefits of training are not lost. It was a good idea to send each participant's supervisor some briefing notes, plus an invitation to discuss the trainee's progress with the training team.

At the end of the course, we handed out certificates with all the supervisors and some senior management present. We thought the public recognition would encourage the trainees to

YES, YOU CAN . . . IMPROVE TEAMING PERFORMANCE!



Our matching instruments

OUR TEAM and MY TEAM-MATES

enable your teams to monitor
such variables as:

- Clarity of goals
- Team competence
- Team cooperation and cohesion
- Conflict resolution
- Overall effectiveness
- Personal satisfaction
- Domination by cliques
- Management support
- Satisficing

evaluate each individual's
contribution to the team as
seen by other members for:

- Clarity of goals
- Technical competence
- Teamwork
- Openness to suggestion
- Pressure on team-mates
- Acknowledging peer contribution
- Dependability

Call toll free: **1-800-537-7249** to
find out more about how this proven
concept can improve team dynamics
in your organization.

Other Clark Wilson coordinated
programs include:

- Leadership
- Executive Leadership
- Sales/Sales Management
- Organization Quality
- Organization Skills for Newcomers

See our development program
model on page 53.

CLARK WILSON PUBLISHING COMPANY

1320 Fenwick Lane, Suite 412
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Telephone: 1-800-537-7249/301-587-2591

Circle No. 115 on Reader Service Card

put their new skills into practice.

Overcome language difficulties.

We introduced a jargon board on which we wrote new or unfamiliar words, such as experiential training and affective learning. This ensured that the participants got the expressions right, and that we could refer to the new terms whenever we needed to.

Our participants faced a particular challenge. Apart from not always being able to follow what we said, because of our Australian accents and expressions, they had to present their practice sessions in English, which for many of them was their second or third language. For most people, getting up in front of a group is daunting enough without a language problem.

We recommended that they conduct at least one session (preferably the first one, a 20-minute skill session) in their preferred language to overcome nerves and also to facilitate transfer of learning. After all, Motu or Pidgin is the

be able to work together under trying circumstances. The team should be composed of complementing personalities, strengths, and weaknesses.

As we were instructing other people how to train, it was essential to show the group different training styles. This variety of options also helped to maintain interest during some very long, hot days.

The team should be able to react quickly and accurately to changes and problems. It should be prepared to reschedule or rewrite material as the occasion demands. Teamwork and consensus under trying circumstances call for a mature approach.

Plan everything! We had to make sure that all our materials were available when we needed them. That meant making sure they were aboard the small plane that took us from Cairns to Tabubil. An acquaintance of ours who ran some courses for the mining company last year found that

As we were copying our handouts, the photocopier developed a tropical disease

language that most of them will use when training.

Spelling correctly while writing on the board is difficult because of the strangeness of writing slowly and larger than usual while having half your mind on what to say or do next. In Australia, if trainees are weak on spelling, we usually recommend that they prepare charts and overheads in advance and have them checked by a second person.

Our New Guinea group faced an additional challenge: many Pidgin words are based on English words, such as "tok" from talk, and "luk aut" from look out, but with phonetic spellings. We suggested, therefore, that participants rehearse their board work and have it checked by a reliable speller. If they still felt uncertain, we advised them to stick to prepared charts and overheads.

Make sure you have a balanced consulting team. Preferably the team members should know each other and

her large suitcase did not fit on the plane, leaving her without a change of clothes, and worse, without her notes.

Have a contingency plan for your handouts. To save weight on the plane we had decided to bring only the masters of our handout material. But on the Sunday before the course, as we were copying our handouts for the next two weeks, the photocopier developed a tropical disease. Our subsequent panic could have been prevented had we brought at least the first two days of handouts with us on the plane.

Live it and film it

Training in weird and wonderful places is an adventure, so be sure to bring a camera or video recorder to capture every detail, right down to the jungle noises outside your window at night as you lie in bed worrying about your sessions the next day.

Above all, we recommend that you have a great experience. ■