

SPEAKING FROM EXPERIENCE

TRAINING AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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"Industry is not in the business of competing with education," according to Marshall Gerstel, education manager of the Manassas, Va., operations of IBM Corp. "Large corporations like to use already-established educational institutions in their employee training programs."

Gerstel was quoted in an article in the May 1976 edition of the *Community and Junior College Journal* which dealt with a cooperative industrial training effort between IBM and the Manassas campus of Northern Virginia Community College. Behind the effort, from the college standpoint, is the notion that community-based educational institutions should involve industry in assessing local manpower needs — and then provide needed instruction at times and places convenient to local workers.

The suburban Washington college did just that. . . . It developed a full certificated program in electronics technology on that basis. In addition to serving IBM's employees, at the company's request, the program now enrolls more than 100 other residents of the area. Completion of the course of study opens doors to immediate employment, career advancement, and further college work.

The story is only one of many examples of cooperative relationships that have come about between business and industry and community colleges . . . and in which training and development professionals are involved. The



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Northern Virginia Community College venture is cited as a resource that may sometimes be overlooked in the search to improve productivity and simultaneously enhance opportunities for personnel.

Most communities across the country are now served by community colleges, sometimes identified as two-year or junior colleges. To put it simply, their mission is to provide educational, training, and developmental services to meet a wide variety of community needs and interests. They are community-based. They are commuter-oriented. And the charges for their services are reasonable. In short, they are accessible for the person who works in a local organization and wants to advance through

part-time study.

Evening and weekend classes enroll as many or more students as day programs. The average age of students is about 30, which reflects the growing numbers of persons already employed who are seeking upward mobility through additional education. Increasingly, persons who already have bachelor's or advanced degrees are taking practical, work-related courses in community colleges.

ASTD Interest

Representatives of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges and the American Society for Training and Development have been talking together about ways in which community colleges and training directors can more effectively relate to what appear to be many mutual interests. An *ad hoc* committee has met to discuss the kinds of services community colleges might offer local firms, particularly with regard to training activities. Though there are many questions to be answered, it would appear that this dialogue will prove extremely useful in the industrial training area. There seem to be many opportunities for working relationships in the offing. Neither community colleges nor business and industry can afford to bypass the possibilities!

Training, of course, should not be the sole preoccupation of the two groups. There are other concerns and interests which impinge

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"TRAINING DIRECTORS SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN COLLEGE ADVISORY COMMITTEES — AND COLLEGE PEOPLE SHOULD BECOME INCREASINGLY MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE NEEDS AND CONCERNS OF INDUSTRY."

on possible future relationships.

More and more men and women will be moving into business and industry, as well as public service and the health fields, directly from community and junior colleges. More than half of all students entering college today begin in two-year institutions. Nearly half of those are enrolled in courses calculated to take them on into career occupations.

Training directors are on the receiving end — and the reception line will grow longer in the years ahead. It is incumbent on people in industry and leadership of the colleges to be in close contact with regard to curriculum planning, counseling, recruiting and placement. Training directors should be involved in college advisory committees — and college people should become increasingly more knowledgeable about the needs and concerns of industry.

Perhaps even more important is the matter of bringing education (all levels) and the world of work closer together. The American Association of Community and Junior Colleges is now actively engaged in an effort to help set up community education-work councils that will provide more effective support for youth as they make the transition from school to work. Obviously, such councils can benefit from representation of training and development professionals who, again, will be involved at the other end of that transition process.

Benefit to Trainers

On a more practical side, community colleges can provide short courses, seminars and other continuing-education programs that would be of benefit to training and development directors as professionals. The institutions have an established track record in providing such programs for other fields.

Primary considerations in suggesting this dimension are the matter of accessibility and the willingness of the institutions to respond to such needs. Along the same lines, many community colleges now offer courses in supervision, management development and training. Persons entering the field should be made aware of such opportunities by the profession.

Not to be overlooked in the interaction between the training field and the community college is the area of teaching. Community colleges, because of their heavy evening schedules and huge part-time enrollments, employ as many part-time teachers as they do full-time personnel. The institutions usually seek out persons who are employed in a given field to teach courses in his or her specialty. Thus, training personnel who wish to broaden their experiences may find opportunities in the colleges to do so. And the institutions will benefit from the experience and expertise of such individuals.

In sum, there's every reason to suggest that the kind of education represented by community colleges has something very much in common with the field of training and development. Both are concerned with productivity and the development of the individual. That common ground should provide substantial room for close and rewarding contact in the years ahead. — *Edmund J. Gleazer Jr.*

Edmund J. Gleazer, Jr. has served since 1958 as executive officer of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, a national nonprofit educational organization serving the country's junior and community colleges. The Association itself, which provides a variety of professional and publications services for its member institutions, is located in the National Center for Higher Education, One Dupont Circle, N.W., Washington, D.C.