Is All Time Wasted on the Job a Waste?

Depending on who you talk to, dead time in the office is either a crime or a boon. Management consultant Andrew Sherwood, chairman of the Goodrich & Sherwood Company in New York City, thinks taking time away from the job is dishonest: "Ask someone to name the most significant crime against business and the person will probably say theft of materials or embezzlement. They would be dead wrong.

"The major crime is stolen time—the time employees waste every year."

Sherwood reports that figures he's seen show that the average employee wastes about a third of every working day by arriving late, leaving early, taking extended lunch hours and coffee breaks, socializing and gossiping, daydreaming, making personal phone calls, doing personal work and correspondence, and taking false sick time.

When they conducted a poll on the subject, Adia Personnel Services, based in Menlo Park, California, discovered that employees spend the equivalent of a three-week vacation "chatting by the water cooler." Their nationwide survey of 1,104 personnel decision makers asked how much time the average employee spends socializing at work. Over two-thirds of those surveyed believed that their employees spend 30 minutes or more "shooting the breeze" with their coworkers. And more than a fourth of this group said employees socialize for over an hour each day.

But many respondents to the Adia poll admitted that "this can be valuable time." Trading recipes or car repair information and discussing children or last night's TV shows foster the camaraderie and team spirit that many companies find essential to their success. Happy employees are more productive workers.

But what if your happy team of employees hasn't "won a game" recently due to excessive socializing? Sherwood suggests that employers faced with that situation follow these steps:

- Set an example and act as a role model. Show people that their boss is the hardest worker in the company.
- Establish clear, feasible rules and enforce them with everyone.
- Monitor activity by carefully observing employees 15 minutes before starting and quitting times, coffee breaks, and lunch.
- Communicate with employees about what they should be doing, how they should proceed, and when their deadlines will be. Employees often waste time because they aren't clear on their priorities.
- Spotlight top performers for special recognition to demonstrate that good work and loyal service are appreciated.
- Involve employees in the operations of the company. Help them recognize how they can contribute to the company's success and what it potentially means to them in promotions and income.

The above list clearly should be applied whether or not an employer thinks employees are spending too much time kibitzing at the cooler. In fact, there may be no direct way to stifle socializing without destroying morale. Adia proffers this interesting advice: The next time you see several employees enjoying an extended coffee break, count to 10—and give them five minutes more.

Getting Copyright Permission

Submitted by Rebecca L. Morgan, Morgan Seminar Group, Sunnyvale, California.

Perhaps you've heard discussions about getting permission to use others' copyrighted materials—articles, cartoons, book chapters. You'd like to do the ethical thing but aren't sure of the procedure. The process, however, is simple once you understand the ins and outs.

Before any publication grants you reproduction permission they generally will ask four things: which quote, pages, chapter, cartoon, or article you'd like to reproduce; date published and from which publication; how the piece will be used; and what the distribution number is (if from a workbook or newsletter).

Reproduction permission is required for all works where there is a copyright holder, including reproduction for in-house materials, newsletters, and overheads. There are a few specific exceptions for nonprofit organizations:

- *Books.* Obtaining a book permission is the easiest process to follow, mainly because you have all the information you need inside the book. Merely write to the "permissions" department at the publisher's address. The department may or may not grant you permission, and if they do, there may be a fee.
- *Magazines.* To get permission to reprint an article from a magazine or journal, write the permissions department and give the same information as stated above. If the magazine holds the copyright, they can decide whether to grant reproduction permission. If not, they will refer you to the author and provide the address—then, simply write the author with the same request. Many magazines charge a fee for copyright permission.
- *Cartoons.* Cartoons are a bit harder to research. Call or write the cartoon syndicate listed on the side of the cartoon. You can easily find the syndicate's address and phone number by calling the cartoon editor of the newspaper or magazine in which the cartoon is printed. The syndicate may grant you free permission—or may ask anywhere from $10 to $200 for unlimited yearly use of the cartoon. This is true not only for workbook reproduction but for overheads as well. For this fee they will often provide camera-ready artwork.

Note: Some companies are now discovering undercover FBI agents who are employed in lower-level positions in order to detect copyright infringements in software, training films, and publications. The permissions process may take time—but isn't the avoidance of copyright infringement worth it?

Breaking the Glass Ceiling

In the last decade, a handful of pioneer females has climbed the management ladder of America's largest companies. But, although they've worked hard and had a significant impact on business, they've stopped short—just out of reach of the highest levels of corporate power. Don't women have what it takes for senior management? Is sexism still keeping them from making it to the top?

These questions and others prompted the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, North Carolina, to undertake a three-year study of executive women in *Fortune*-100-size companies. Their findings have been published as a book, *Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Can Women Reach the Top of America's Largest Corporations?*, published by Addison-Wesley.

The study found that women must break through a unique set of double barriers before they can rise to the top. The first is a "glass ceiling," a transparent barrier just below the level of general manager. More and more women are breaking this ceiling, only to be confronted with a more impenetrable barrier blocking them from the real power of senior management.

Comparing its data on executive women with previous research on their male counterparts, the center found that, contrary to popular belief, there are very few differences between the skills and attitudes of men and women at executive levels. Both face considerable pressure holding down a demanding, executive job. But, they found, only women have to shoulder a triple load of pressure:

- the job itself;
- the responsibility of being pioneers, the highly visible representatives of a minority, playing a nontraditional role in a traditional environment;
- the strain of incorporating important demands from outside work—the vagaries of pregnancy, family, and childrearing—with a career.

Female executives, the findings show, are expected to be less effective than men, so they must prove they are more effective. Executive women also must master a narrow band of acceptable behavior, a band that blends some disparate qualities. They must

- be tough, but not macho;
- take risks, but be consistently outstanding;
- be ambitious, but not expect equal treatment;
- shoulder responsibility, but follow the advice of others.

According to the book's authors—Ann H. Morrison, Randall P. White, and Ellen Van Velsor—"finding the acceptable middle ground while still tackling the extremes of each pair is the challenge put to female executives. And meeting this challenge has more impact than anything else on their success."

The authors point out that, "We face a critical time for female executives in corporate America.

"At a time when American industry is restructuring itself to face more effective worldwide competition, companies need all of the talent they can get—men and women."

Training Away Workplace Problems

Submitted by Michael Shahnasarian, ISFA Corporation, Tampa, Florida.

Unlike their younger counterparts who often approach learning with a "who knows, maybe someday I'll be able to use this" attitude, most adults grow impatient with theory-laden training that seems to lack immediate relevance. Personalizing adults' learning experiences is one way to accommodate their pragmatism.

Case studies, simulations, and role plays are the primary learning activities trainers use to relate classroom instruction to real-world applications. Often, however, these activities revolve around a contrived scenario and trainer-supplied information—conditions that aren't necessarily in sync with participants' work situations.

Two excellent ways to promote transference of training from the classroom to the workplace are through "write your own role play" and applied case study. These modifications to traditional small-group activities allow participants to apply immediately instruction that challenges the problems they face. And, it gives them an opportunity to get feedback—feedback that can further enhance their training experience.

In the first modification, "write your own role play," participants respond to questions that accompany role-play information. The questions ask about details relevant to participants' work situations and prompt them to adapt accordingly the conduct of their role plays. For instance, in a role play in which participants are to make a persuasive presentation, participants could be asked to act out the presentation as if they were making it to a specific decision maker in their organization. Details participants might consider include prior interactions with the decision maker, key organizational issues, and the decision maker's style and preferences for how material is presented. The "write your own role play" can be conducted more authentically by encouraging participants to brief the other actors/participants on how they choose to personalize the enactment before conducting it.

The applied case study is another learning activity that allows participants to apply newly learned skills to their work while still in the classroom. Here, participants supplement—or, in some cases, substitute—trainer-supplied information with information specific to challenges and problems they face. Again, this modification serves to accommodate better adults' learning preferences: it allows them to direct their own learning and problem solving, to draw on their experience, and to apply new knowledge to current problems. The applied case study may require you to contract your participants in advance and instruct them on either the information they need to gather or the preparation they need to complete before the scheduled training.

A decision to use the "write your own role play" or the applied case study will depend on many factors, such as your learning objectives, the subject matter, and time constraints. The benefits, nevertheless, that adults can derive when you allow them to customize their training merit consideration when you design your next course.

Videotape in the Classroom

Submitted by Janice Crabtree Wilson, NCR Corporation, Dayton, Ohio.

Videotapes help in most classrooms, and every year they become more plentiful, more readily available, and of better quality. Publishers and training companies have videotapes for sale and lease, and many of the larger companies make in-house videos on the use and promotion of their products for training technicians, salespeople, and customers. Trainers can easily acquire videotapes on almost any subject and, consequently, use them very frequently.

But the quality of a videotape is not the key factor in its effectiveness as a learning tool. Trainer technique is.

First, the trainer must be aware of learner attention span and absorption capacity. After 20 minutes viewers' attention and concentration levels drop significantly, making short viewing segments best. This doesn't mean you shouldn't use long videotapes; it simply means that viewers should watch the tape in segments with student activity centered on the just-completed segment. Segments as brief as five minutes will serve to change class activity and focus student attention on the learning objective of the video.

One implication of segmented viewing is that the trainer must know the videotape and must plan carefully the breaks in the video and the activities following each break. Videotapes then become a true teaching and learning tool, instead of a way to give instructors a break in a long training session. (Heaven knows, though, we all deserve breaks to catch our breath and retrench.)

As repetitive and trite as it sounds, the most important step is to know the objective of showing the tape. There is a reason—perhaps several—why you have chosen this particular tape to use in a training session. Write those reasons out in words that you can use to introduce the tape to the students. If you are going to segment the tape, write remarks for each segment. When you introduce the tape, let the students know what you expect them to do with it. If they are to participate in group discussion, divide them into groups. If they are to look for the main points you make, tell them that. By giving the assignment before showing the tape, you will focus their attention on the tape. Even adult learners still want to comply with the teacher's instructions.

Only after you've made all your plans are you ready to show the videotape to the learners. When you are in the classroom, introduce the videotape by stating the objective. In the data-processing world, we call it formatting the disk—that is, dividing the disk into segments ready to receive information. When you give the assignment, you prepare the students' minds to receive the information you feel they need to get from the video. You set up categories into which they can file the information as they watch. Since they know they'll perform as soon as the lights go up, they'll pay closer attention.

The following are sample activities to assign for follow-up to a videotape or to a segment:

■ *Have a class discussion*. Set out a few points that the students are prepared to talk about.

■ *Break the class into groups to discuss a particular point or idea*. Assign the groups before starting the tape and explain the topic. Students can immediately break into these groups when the video ends. Give them adequate time for discussion, and then have each group relate its conclusions to the class. Discuss the differences and similarities.

■ Have each student write something about the videotape. Then either collect the papers and write responses on them or have selected students read their papers to the class. I suggest these topics: impressions of the subject matter, an interpretation of the tape, a summary of the main points, personal action items as a result of seeing the tape, a list of questions for discussion or for a test, and an explanation of the message of the videotape.

■ *If the videotape you are viewing concerns performance, have the learners perform the task*. Practice closing a sale, using a PC, or trying out a management technique, for example.

The final step is to summarize the lesson. Since there are a variety of ways to summarize any lesson, you'll want to choose a method that complements—but doesn't repeat—the activity you used in the body of the lesson. And last, don't summarize by asking, "Any questions?"

Why Managers Must Take Responsibility for Training

Excerpted from an article submitted by Alison Parks, DA Marketing Group, London.

Training expenditure in Britain is not seen as an investment expected to lead to an identifiable income stream, but as an overhead that can, like building maintenance, be reduced when times are hard. This attitude contrasts strongly to the Japanese way, where the volume of training has actually increased during times of recession.

It is time British managers realized that effective training is so much a part of Japan's economic success that, if we are to emulate it, we should approach human resource development with equal seriousness.

Angus Doulton, director of the National Interactive Video Centre, maintains that Britain could lead the world in training—but sees the attitude of our businessmen as the stumbling block to be overcome: "We in Britain know more about how people learn than anywhere else in the world. Even the Americans look to us for this research.

"If our businessmen had the same attitudes to training as our overseas competitors, the UK could be streets ahead, not only in terms of training but also in terms of our market share."

Says Doulton, whose center introduces industrialists to educationalists, the problem lies in the status given by directors to training: "The cost of developing and making an interactive video is high, and in order to get main board directors interested, we focus on the benefits of the system and justify it as an investment rather than referring to it as a training system, which seems to have low status in their eyes."

The message should be clear. Senior management no longer can cling to attitudes which imply that time spent on training is counterproductive, unproductive, unnecessary, or "someone else's job." Training must be seen—as senior management's overseas peers see it—as an investment in the future profitability of their company.

"In Practice" is edited and written by Robert Bovè. Send items of interest to: In Practice, Training & Development Journal, *1630 Duke St., Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.*