

passes both corrective comments and praise.

A review of feedback practices is useful:

- ▶ Be specific.
- ▶ Be timely.
- ▶ Describe the behavior's effect on you.
- ▶ Focus on behaviors people can change.

Again, refer the group to a collection of brief, useful readings—this time on feedback—behind another notebook tab in the manual.

**Highlight group development.** Forming, storming, norming, and performing are, of course, the four stages of a common model of group development.

It's OK to make a brief lecture out of group-development concepts. But don't try people's participatory patience too far. They may start to wonder why they're sitting down and you're standing up. Simply point out that most well-functioning groups—high-performance groups—go through those four stages. Effective trainers do what they can to help their groups get the most out of each stage. You'll do it in your train-the-trainer sessions, and the new trainers will do it with their own classes.

Here's how it works:

It's important right off the bat to be clear about goals, objectives, and time frames, and to make introductions and clarify expectations. People want to know who's here and what's up. That's the forming stage.

When things get a tad testy, and frustrations are being voiced, you know you've gone on to storming. Here, the trainer can help by listening, asking for clarification, and drawing people out.

If you sense a little impatience in the group, the participants are ready to "norm" and get down to work. Here's where you bring out your scenarios, flipcharts, role plays, lectures, and overheads. Focus on process before content.

If you feel ignored, you know that the group is performing. You—the facilitator—may stay or leave, as you like.

**Never run over into lunch.** There is only one firm piece of instructional advice: "Never run over into lunch."

That directive comes from the expe-

## DON'T TRY PEOPLE'S PATIENCE TOO FAR

rience of one who did. The longer the session went on, the more participants were writing. It was glorious—the elusive teachable moment we've heard so much about had finally arrived.

Alas! Participants were not taking copious notes. They were filling out their evaluation forms. Comments like, "Classroom management skills need work," "Consider taking a time-management class?" and "Could have been done in less time," were plentiful.

Don't try the patience of training participants. That's good advice to remember in your own class, when you're training subject matter experts to train. And it's good advice for them to remember later, when it's their turn to train.

*(The author would like to thank his colleagues Michael Berney, Nancy Filsoof, and Kate Lynott for reviewing this article.)*

### Trainer Training—The Malawi Case

*By Lewis B. Dzimbiri, University of Malawi, Chancellor College, Box 280, Zomba, Malawi. Phone: 265/522 222; fax: 265/522 046; telex: 44742 CHANCOLMI.*

**W**hat do trainers actually do? The answer to that question varies, depending on your perceptions. Some people would say that trainers are supposed to "deliver the goods." Others believe that trainers should structure, focus, and guide learning, as well as serve as coaches. Still others view trainers as facilitators of learning, enablers, or inquiring partners in learning.

Those are all good answers, and they do point toward what trainers really do. But is that all? Aren't trainers involved in pretraining and post-training activities, as well?

Trainers may undertake front-end analysis to determine whether a performance problem requires training or a nontraining solution. They may perform training needs analysis—examining jobs, duties, and tasks to unveil performance gaps. What about the design of training programs, including content, methods, and evaluation?

In other words, trainers are involved in a practical way at every stage of what is described as a systematic approach to training. But most definitions of what trainers do tend to focus narrowly on conducting classroom instruction. And that preoccupation can be dysfunctional when we are talking about preparing new trainers for their assignments.

How can a train-the-trainer program be designed and implemented so that it makes new trainers more competent in all aspects of their training work, from front-end analysis through validation of results? Should such a program emphasize knowledge, ability, or both? Should we equip trainers with theory, or should we focus on practical skills? Can we do both?

Too often, we do not. Many courses that seek to prepare new trainers are heavy on theory and light on practice. Trainer trainees come out of such courses knowledgeable about a systematic approach to training but nervous about their ability to implement one.

But a trainer's job is practical. So an experiential, learning-by-doing approach to training trainers is long overdue.

**Twelve steps.** The following approach is a practical, 12-step method for training subject-matter experts to train. The Malawi Institute of Management in east central Africa developed this method for a course held in Blantyre, Malawi. The goal of the program was to train public- and private-sector employees in the skills and concepts of training.

The first step in the train-the-trainer process is agenda building. Ask participants what they want to learn and how they prefer to learn it. Participants should brainstorm in small groups and use flipcharts to present their ideas to the entire class. As they do, the course directors should make comments, take notes, and incorporate participant views into the course content.

The second step is to ground future trainers in the theory of training. Use whole-group lectures with question-and-answer periods to cover such concepts as education, training, and development; the role of trainers; and principles of adult learning.

The third step is an introduction to front-end analysis. Participants should understand this concept before they can move on to lessons in designing and conducting training. Use a case study, and have them try to identify solutions to a given performance problem—including training and nontraining solutions.

Allow plenty of time for the next segment of the workshop, in which you'll place participants in small groups and have them identify "live" organizational problems. These should be practical sessions, including fact-finding interviews with line managers to pinpoint performance problems. Then each group presents to the class, detailing the processes used to prepare for the interview and to conduct it, as well as the training or nontraining solution identified.

In the fifth step, trainer trainees gain knowledge of a systems approach to training. Through lecture and class discussion, show how trainers select tasks for training in, how they determine the training population, and how they write training objectives.

The next step looks back at the case study developed in the third step for learning about front-end analysis. Now, have participants work in small groups to analyze the job of the employees with the identified performance problem. They will analyze the job duties and tasks and examine employees' actual performance and identified performance gaps. Guide participants in writing training objectives to fill the performance need. Then, small groups will present their work to the class.

In step seven, future trainers will learn about the design of training programs. Using lecture and classroom discussion, cover such areas as performance objectives, standards and conditions, training objectives, enabling objectives, teaching points, and design of evaluation checks.

The next step also looks at the design of training, but it takes a practical approach rather than a theoretical

## THE APPROACH BLEND THEORY AND PRACTICE

one. Back in small groups, participants can use the same case studies they worked with earlier. This time, each group sets out to design training based on the performance problem that has been identified. Learners should use the task analysis done in a previous exercise to clarify the performance objectives, conditions, and standards. And they should design training objectives that grow out of the performance objectives.

In the whole-group discussion afterward, focus on what was done, how it was done, and why. Then allow each group some time to modify its decisions based on feedback from the other groups.

Step nine uses lecture and discussion to explain the concepts of classroom instruction. Cover the following points:

- ▶ lesson plans
- ▶ training objectives, enabling objectives, and teaching points

### Training the Trainer: A Workshop Outline

Here are the 12 steps to a practical approach for training new trainers:

1. agenda building
2. theory-based coverage of training concepts
3. introduction to front-end analysis
4. identification of performance problems and solutions
5. analysis of training activities
6. case-study analysis
7. theory of training design
8. practice in training design
9. theory of classroom instruction
10. practice in classroom instruction
11. individual presentations
12. feedback on individual presentations.

- ▶ the introduction to a session
- ▶ the main body of the instruction
- ▶ evaluation
- ▶ the conclusion.

Step 10 is a more practical, hands-on session on conducting classroom instruction. Each small group should begin with the training objectives its members developed in earlier segments. From those objectives, group members should complete a lesson plan and conduct classroom instruction. Each group identifies training aids and has 30 minutes to make a class presentation. Other participants should observe and comment on the introduction, main body, and conclusion of the classroom instruction.

The course in Blantyre allowed two days for the next step, in which each participant identifies a topic, develops training objectives and a lesson plan, and presents 30 minutes of classroom instruction—using all the elements of a good presentation. Videotape the presentations and the feedback from other trainees.

Step 12 is a playback of the individual presentations and feedback.

**A complex interaction.** Of course, any train-the-trainer course is a complex network of activities. And the workshop held in Blantyre was a particularly comprehensive and intensive one. It's hard to summarize such a complex interaction between trainers and trainer trainees in a few pages.

But the details are not as important as the nature of the Blantyre workshop's approach to trainer training. The 12-step approach involves a high level of trainee involvement, an experiential focus, and a blending of theory and practice at every step. The use of live case studies from beginning to end brings the workplace into the training environment.

The result of such an approach: new trainers who are not just theoretically equipped with the knowledge to conduct training, but who are also equipped with the confidence and skills they need to be successful trainers.

*"Training 101" is edited by Catherine M. Petrini. Send your short articles for consideration to "Training 101," Training & Development, 1640 King Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313-2043.*