

## Honing Your Axe-Wielding Skills

"Clearing the Deadwood" (January *Journal*) presented some excellent hints for handling the firing process. However, I must take strong exception to the author's suggestion to hold the termination meeting at the end of the last day of the work week. While a somewhat common practice, it serves none of the parties involved well—not the employee and his or her family, nor staff who remain, nor the person who actually does the firing.

First, late-week firing prohibits terminated employees from taking any immediate positive steps in their career continuation process. The understandable uncertainty they usually feel about their future will be further aggravated by their powerlessness to move forward. Even if the firm has secured outplacement services, the timing of the termination is still critical. A Monday or Tuesday morning firing allows for professional intervention to deal with the immediate situation while also giving the former employee several days to adjust to the initial shock. In addition, this time provides an opportunity for the individual to take some positive strides before facing several unproductive (from a job-seeking perspective) days. This is not only beneficial to the terminated employee, but will also be highly reassuring to family members who feel equally, if not more, affected by the job loss.

The "watercooler whispers" the author warned about are a reality that must be dealt with, no matter when a termination occurs. My experience has shown that an early-week termination allows the manager to address the concerns of the remaining employees quickly and directly, thus minimizing the potential of a longer-term, more disruptive adjustment process.

Finally, an early-week termination is far easier on the manager who must deliver the bad news. With almost 100 percent consistency, managers indicate that firing a fellow employee is the most difficult and unpleasant of all job-related tasks. To have the onerous burden of a pending termination meeting hanging over one's head for most of the week is sure to send stress and anxiety levels off the scale and productivity into a nosedive. Morale will surely

suffer too. In *Up the Organization*, Robert Townsend related that whenever he was uncertain as to where to start his day, he asked himself two questions: What did he least want to do? Who did he least want to see? Once he had faced those two, the rest of the day was a breeze. I think there's a lesson to be learned here from those thoughts.

*Craig P. Rider*  
President and Senior Consultant  
Career Resources, Inc.  
Dayton, Ohio

## What Be Leadership?

The *In Practice* article (March *Journal*) on "Leadership and Women" stating the views espoused at the first Influential Women International Conference was very informative.

Unfortunately the article contained grammatical errors—quite surprising for a professional magazine of your caliber. Perhaps the copy should read: What is leadership?, instead of "What is leaders?" and What responsibilities do women have as leaders?, instead of "What responsibilities do women have as leadership?"

In any case, thank you for making me aware of the organization.

*Anne M. Smith*  
Assistant Managing Director-Tampa  
Executive Group, Inc.  
Tampa, Florida

## One for the Sun

My only difference with Coleman Finkle (February *Journal*) is that I want a room with windows when I train. I have never found this to distract participants: A person enticed away by a view will be enticed by something else if there is no view. I need natural light, contact with weather, and contact with the natural world outside, and this also seems to be true for my clients.

*Anita Putnam*  
Director of Training  
Phoenix Mutual Life Insurance Company  
Hartford, Connecticut

## Training Vs. Consulting

When I saw the cover of the February *Journal*, I expected to read an article telling me I too can be a consultant, just by changing what I call myself.

You can imagine my great surprise, and pleasure, to read your excellent treatment of the subject. It carefully made the distinction between training and consulting and showed the transition through the "requirements" section of the article.

I was also impressed by the contributions of the people you interviewed. They all made clear the need to focus on the client first and the solution second. The only point I could disagree with was the implied order in Mr. Bellman's listing of skills. If the last "it" in his second sentence refers to "data," then I would evaluate the data as part of the earlier "analyzing" step. Of course, if "it" refers to evaluating the action taken in the previous phrase, then I agree with him totally.

Let me applaud the way you correctly point out that trainers can grow into internal "human resource development" consultants. Not once did you claim they were internal management consultants. As one who has been a member of the Association of Internal Management Consultants for almost as long as I've been a member of ASTD, I'm keenly aware of the difference between functional consulting and general consulting. Yours is one of the few articles to focus on the former without automatically assuming it to be coterminous with the latter.

*Ferdie Setaro*  
Managing Director  
TLE Consultants  
Haddonfield, New Jersey

*Editor's Note:* The "it" in question refers to the action taken.

**Editor's Note:** To express your views in our monthly "Issues" department, please address all correspondence to: "ISSUES," Training & Development Journal, 1630 Duke St., Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.