

# SPEAKING FROM EXPERIENCE

IF YOU DON'T . . .  
NOBODY ELSE WILL!

BY JACK FALVEY

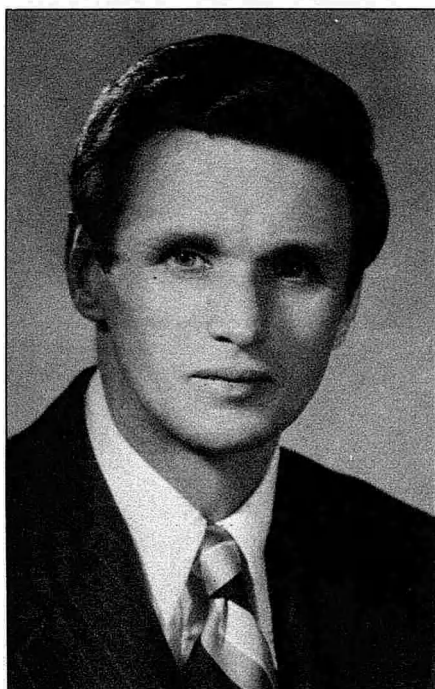
If your boss thinks that the training problems in your organization belong to the training department maybe he or she is part of the problem! Training and development has always been the personal responsibility of each individual trainee. If you as a trainer assume that responsibility, either in part or in full, you are asking for all kinds of trouble. The only developmental responsibility that you can take on in full is your own program of self-development.

In each issue of the *Training and Development Journal*, the "positions wanted" columns usually outnumber the "positions available" listings. This is one indicator that the training profession has taken on some no-win situations and is paying accordingly.

Why has this fundamental assumption of responsibility for training and development been taken on by our profession? In all probability it has found its way in through the experiences of both readers and students involved in academic educations.

As Malcolm Knowles so ably points out, there is a difference between childhood and adult learning: One principle difference is in the area of accountability and responsibility. If we as trainers revert to norms of our primary school days we deserve the resulting dire consequences.

A further refinement in the training game which takes its cue from the child, parent, teacher triangle (non-TA terms) is the refusal



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of many parents to accept any part in the education of their children. The industrial counterpart of this situation is the line manager who feels that the training function is a staff responsibility and that he or she is only accountable for operations.

Into this mix proceeds the trainer with a slight messianic tendency, feeling that with the right slide show, the proper platform style, and the correct practical exercise all can be made well. The trainee will learn, the line manager will accept the trainee's techniques and the trainer will be appreciated by all (and live happily ever after).

If you live in that fairy-tale

world good luck to you on your next job and the one after that and your one after that and your one after that. . . .

If you accept the real world as it *actually* is what can you do about it?

The first person you have power and influence over is the trainee. Beginning there your mission is to get the trainee to take responsibility for his or her own development . . . simple in concept but difficult to do. It can be done but it takes a great deal of skill and determination. Your alternative is pretty simple and that is to develop a strong entry style for your next few companies.

Next of course is to convince line management that, if they want a trainee to perform their way, they ought to get involved. This is also a neat trick but again, "interviewsville" is the alternative. Finally, your boss has to agree that your job is managing the developmental process and resources, not running "Ding Dong School."

I must admit that those three tasks are pretty tall orders. When taken as a group they get you thinking about heading for a small college somewhere to take up a nonthreatening teaching career. Unfortunately those jobs are fewer and further between because lack of accountability has killed off many of the colleges where the jobs are at. So about all you can do is stand and fight. Take your problem one step at a time and don't expect to change the world over-

night!

Jim Evered, the current president of the National Society of Sales Training Executives (NSSTE) has said that a good training program is like the sculpturing of an elephant. You can't drill a hole in the rock and blast out the form desired. You have to chip, chip, chip. Sometimes you take out too big a piece and have to go find another block and begin again. If you are to have any success you have to understand the magnitude of the job and pick the size and location of the chips you intend to knock off very carefully. With patience, some discipline, a little bit of force now and then, a pretty good elephant can be roughed out in five or six years with an additional three or four years added on to polish the edges.

Like the recent college graduate who jumps from company to company looking for the kind of job he or she expected to find, there finally comes a realization that the jobs are all the same and that with rare exception the individual is

going to have to accept the challenges as offered. Professional trainers, after bouncing around awhile with hurt egos and feelings, hopefully will come to the conclusion that with rare exception they will not be appreciated until they get the accountability for results on the shoulders of those who can best affect it . . . first on the trainee and second on the line manager.

Now this whole process might seem to be self-defeating for our profession because if "self-development, line-supervised" becomes a universal reality, you and I will cease to exist as professional trainers.

Not quite . . . first the teaching of that very process is a career in itself and the concept that "basic" be universally accepted is an impossibility. The job of managing the developmental technology is our profession of the future.

With job security assured in the face of admittedly a mountainous task, I say let's begin. Let's teach the trainees to learn, not just our course material but the basic skills

of self-directed, unending learning. Let's get line management involved, step by step, inch by inch until they finally see the benefits of having full input in the development of those people whose productivity will contribute to their own career success. Finally, last but not least, let's get our bosses to agree to our own objectives that will be budgeted and evaluated not on some manufactured, measurable indicator but on how well we manage the developmental process and select resources for our managers and trainees to work with.

Will you accept that challenge? Well . . . if you don't . . . Nobody else will! — *John J. Falvey*

Jack Falvey is a nationally known human resource development specialist and management consultant. Formerly with the Gillette Co. in Boston, he has worked in new-product launches, designed and executed a three-year career motivational upgrade package, written and produced award-winning films and most recently is publishing a three-part series on sales management in *Sales and Marketing Management Magazine*.

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