

Evaluation: Statement of Purpose

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Educational programs have long been thought of as an integral part of the American democratic philosophy. Under the assumption that an educated or informed citizen is a better citizen, education has, over the years, developed into a system almost completely controlled by local, state and federal legislative action. It is within this societal framework that industry has been alerted to the need for something more than personal experience in its supervisory, managerial and executive personnel. With the tremendous technological advances in the past twenty years and the advent of the employee-centered philosophy of labor-management relations, it became apparent that additional techniques were necessary to understand production problems and employee problems. In response to this need, training programs have been established in almost every major industry in America today. Training programs are industry's response to the need for "educated" personnel.

Whether the educational pursuit is sponsored by the government, private citizens, or corporate enterprises a correlative need emerges of determining the effectiveness of a particular program or

educational curriculum. This need has not always been recognized, even by those in the formal or academic educational fields. To paraphrase a prefacing comment found in Leonard and Eurich's *Evaluation of Modern Education* and point out the need in formal as well as industrial education—"A responsibility that the educators (trainers) have not always assumed is that of furnishing the public (management) with a continuous evaluation of the effect of education (training) upon the lives (efficient functioning) of boys and girls (supervisors and managers)."

How can this be reflected in terms of the overall aims of a corporate enterprise? If we candidly accept the premise that the basic goals of industrial education are intimately associated with the "raison d'etre" of any industrial organization, that of competing effectively and efficiently in a competitive market, then it is incumbent upon the industrial trainer to evaluate his Program continuously not for self-aggrandizement, not to prove that he is an essential member of the management staff, but rather to help him keep his own feet on the ground by providing the type of program which

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will act as a force in assisting the organization in maintaining and improving its competitive position.

SUBJECTIVE EVALUATION

To substantiate the basic logic behind the assertion made above one needs only to draw a parallel between an industrial training program and the installation of a new piece of equipment. Prior to the purchase and subsequent installation, an engineering staff and representatives of the production department determine the size, type and specifications of the equipment to be purchased according to the *predictable determinable, purposive* ends desired. Having thus determined, in so far as available facts permit, that which will best produce the desired ends, the purchase and installation are effected.

The activity does not stop here—it continues on through the productive operation through continuous evaluation, change, re-evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the machine as seen in terms of the pre-determined purpose. The same objective approach must and can be used in the training function! It will be argued by some that the two fields are not comparable; that the predictive, determinable value of a unit of mechanical productivity, because of its tangible objective measurable properties, is more readily evaluated on the basis of ends achievement; that because trainers work to effect changes in people by altering attitudes, imparting knowledge, stimulating interest, seeking to change a nebulous subjective something known as behavior, they must be content with subjective impressionistic evaluation if any at all. If that misguided, unin-

formed type of individual is in the field of education—industrial or otherwise—who plays “ostrich” with real issues and hard-core problems of evaluation and insists that measurable evaluation belongs to the white-towered theorists then he is in danger of being defeated and throwing himself into the impossible realm of intellectual (?) rationalization.

CLEAR-CUT OBJECTIVES

Training methods, training programs, teaching techniques *are* measurable, they *can* be evaluated and objectively can be shown to be effective or ineffective. The crux of the problem is not in evaluating a program *after* it has been presented but rather in incorporating in the planning phases a system whereby evaluation will move as a vital, integral part of the system.

One of the primary questions, the moving force behind any endeavor, is at once a question of function and a question of evaluation; what is it that the program is attempting to do? What is the purpose? What are the objectives? If the objectives are clearly defined, completely understood, and within the realm of reasonable accomplishment then the foundation for evaluation is firmly imbedded in the foundation of the program. This is a vital part of the process and cannot be over-emphasized. Vague, ill-defined, overly-subjective, unrealistic objectives can only result in ineffective, “half-a-loaf” training . . . and this is one area where half-a-loaf is *not* better than none at all.

ESTABLISH CRITERIA

Once the objectives are clearly spelled out—determined to be practical and de-

sirable, another step must be taken before specific programming can be started. Again, it is necessary to maintain primary interest in evaluation. The second step is that of establishing a criterion or set of criteria for each of the objectives defined in the first step. How does one hope to determine the effectiveness of any program unless he pre-determines the standards or criteria by which he will measure progress and against which he will determine the extent to which his objectives were realized? This too is an extremely important function involving a clear, concise construction and statement of a set of criteria directly related to the objectives. In reality, the criteria are often a re-statement of the objectives in terms that change their perspective, from pure objectives to standards of achievement.

With these two giant steps taken, one can now begin to study his objectives and criteria for the purpose of selecting and constructing a program and/or techniques which will most efficiently and effectively bring about a realization of the stated objectives.

SELECT TECHNIQUES

The final step in evaluation is measuring the results to determine the extent to which the objectives were realized according to the criteria. This, too, is a function which must begin or be considered at the initiation of the program. If you are desirous of determining what has been accomplished you must have some idea of where you were at the starting point. Again, in reality, the measuring techniques follow directly from the criteria. If, for example, one of your objectives is to effect in the su-

supervisor a positive attitude toward safety in the shop, your criteria might be (1) that over a given period of time the supervisor will take an active interest in accident prevention, (2) that over a given period of time the supervisor will display an interest in safety instruction, and (3) that over a given period of time the supervisor will show an active interest in eliminating hazardous practices of his men. (It should be noted that the criteria are couched in terms of the *behavior* of the supervisors.)

Then, devices must be developed to measure each of these factors as defined by the criteria. The measurement devices might be observation, attitude scale, accident frequency, mechanical changes, etc. Obviously, to assess change effected, one must first know what the picture was before the program started.

THE BLOCK

It is in the area of specific measuring devices that we find the greatest resistance to the process of evaluation. The resistance stems as much from a practical basis as it does from an open skepticism of the value of present social measuring devices and techniques. However, the problem must be approached by using on ourselves our own techniques of training. Much of the skepticism arises from a lack of real understanding of the measuring techniques available. It is reasonable then that continuing study in this area is necessary to development of a critical appreciation of the devices available and the value derivable in utilization for the purpose of evaluation.

As for the practicability of application one need only to view the advisability of complete evaluation in terms of the

value of the training function. If the ideas and philosophies and goals of training are designed to contribute to the efficiency of the system within which they operate, then it becomes necessary to determine where they have or have not been successful. Subjective statements of value are not sufficient to indicate progress or failure. The use of specific measurement techniques as the method of identifying success is as important to training as the profit-loss statement is to determination of corporate success. The element of practicability should then be seen, in this instance, not in terms of negating the use of all measuring techniques but in terms of the selection of specific devices. Which technique, tool, or device will best serve in this instance?

The summation of this entire field of thought can be made in a statement of reality. As trainers, functioning within a corporate structure, we deal with practical men who measure the value of a program in realistic dollars and cents expended (or better still, invested) for the sole purpose of realizing a monetary profit through competitive endeavors. The value of training must be seen by them in terms of dollars saved through increased efficiency of those who receive the training. This can be done in only one way—an intense, objective evaluation that has its inception from the very beginning in terms of objectives—criteria—measurement. This cannot be done for self-aggrandizement or for establishing a halo for training but must be done to establish firmly the merits of training in assisting supervisors, managers, executives in increasing their efficiency as the needs present themselves.

RETAILING

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RETRAINING

Dependent upon the need, retraining is accomplished through an individual conference, a department meeting, a division meeting, store-wide retraining when a major change in systems occurs, or department notices for follow-through by the department supervisor.

Training in retailing is not a task for one or two training specialists, but rather a store-wide operation. The results of training are reflected in the daily sales sheet, the monthly operating statement and the yearly profit and loss statement. The effect of training is judged daily by the customers.

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