

When Management Squints

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Training should pay for itself many times over, but training directors are often hard put to prove that their costs even equal results obtained. One answer to the problem is to assign dollar values to the results just as computations are made when the training budget is prepared. But this system will work only in very special cases. For the bulk of the programs, few training men want to place themselves in the uncomfortable position of defending training results by submitting estimated figures that cannot be supported.

No training director needs convincing that training pays off, but management squints especially hard at those operations which have broad and sometimes nebulous objectives. Some training directors often win the annual battle of the budget by marshalling a few facts and a lot of personal charm and thrusting out with them in a manner similar to Douglas Fairbanks backing up a staircase.

Management, with a heavy sabre, may slash training budgets because the training department cannot prove with dollar signs and decimal points the value of its activities.

How can a training man develop more facts to insure budget approval? How can he be logically persuasive if some of the facts cannot be formed into the dollars and cents pattern the boss expects?

Imagination and leadership must be put to work in developing and presenting the training program. These are the first steps in budget acceptance. Enthusiastic comments from supervisors and managers during the year have a way of filtering throughout the organization and will do more to sell the program than the most carefully prepared training reports.

There are a few specific approaches to this job of proving that training pays. Safety programs, for example, lend themselves to rather accurate cost studies. Even the somewhat misty field of human relations shines through when before and after figures are compiled on employee turnover, grievances, and fights. On-the-job and written tests can indicate performance improvement and levels of knowledge. Production figures may reveal the influence of training, provided that definite problems are isolated before the training department puts its corrective efforts into operation. Be careful about taking full credit for an increase in production, however, since other factors may have contributed to the increase.

Supporting evidence for the value of training often occurs in the form of surveys, questionnaires, and interviews. Here too, boomerangs may develop if management discovers soft spots in make up or methods. Don't overlook the results of surveys initiated by other

groups within your organization if training interpretations can be drawn from them.

Finally, when compiling training statistics for a report, remember what your boss wants. He is interested in the fulfillment of training objectives, not in the number of films shown or conferences held.

Developing facts and figures that will stand up is a real challenge. But what about those areas of training where re-

sults are woven into the whole fabric of company operations? If you are convinced that your firm is benefiting from the training program, meet the resistance with logical and persuasive replies.

All good salesmen are prepared for objections because they know that once the customer receives a satisfactory answer there is a good chance of closing the sale. Here are a few examples of the type of replies you can make in meeting management's objections:

OBJECTION

Training is too expensive.

There is too much stress on human relations.

Training does not seem to be solving our problems.

Training never seems to get anywhere.

Training takes too much of a supervisor's time.

Let's hire men already trained.

Let's cut out all training and take a little loss in operating efficiency.

YOUR ANSWER

How much does a poor supervisor cost?

Nothing is as complex as one human being, and we are dealing with hundreds of them.

Will the *lack* of training solve them?

Training is like bailing out a boat. It needs constant attention or the results may be disastrous.

One hour a week develops skills and attitudes which save money all year around.

That may solve a few of today's problems, but are you prepared to pay \$6,000 for a \$3,000 man when the labor market gets tight?

We don't cancel fire insurance to save money. Let's keep our training insurance policy paid up.

Naturally, when major problems are solved through training it is easy to show savings and justify the cost of training. It is not so easy to prove that many problems did not occur because of training's preventive techniques.

Never pass up an opportunity to evaluate your training program in terms that can be readily understood by management and, if you have a program that is doing a good job, you'll take all the "squin" out of budgeting.