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Tell Us What You Think

What is this organizational visioning thing? A broad definition of it is that it is a process by which an organization creates a picture of what and where it wants to be in the future, thereby giving it a goal. Many corporations have placed great importance on it, and as an outgrowth and enhancement of the management-by-objective theories of the early fifties and strategic-planning theories of the mid-sixties, it has become an important tool for OD and strategic-planning professionals.

But how has it helped organizations? If you have led or participated in an organizational visioning process, how did it go? In what ways has it benefited your organization in planning for the future? And if you've reached the point in time you were trying to envision, what does it look like? Is it the process of visioning that is most important or helpful, or is it the plan made as result of the process?

We'd like to hear what you think about visioning. Send your views to "Issues," *Training & Development Journal*, 1630 Duke Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.

The Winnah!

Using criteria that reflect the writing philosophy of Dugan Laird, judges for the 1988 Dugan Laird Award have chosen A. Glenn Kiser for his article "I Ain't Yo Momma and Daddy," which appeared in the June 1988 issue of *Training Magazine*.

Mr. Kiser is the director of management development for the Duke Power Company in Charlotte, NC. He will receive a check for \$700.

The judges for this year's competition were Ned Herrmann (The Ned Herrmann Group), Mac McCullough (M/M Associates), and Mavis Wilson (California Department of Motor Vehicles).

Mac McCullough
The Woodlands Group
Potomac, Maryland

Leading Questions

(The following letters are in response to various letters in the January 1989 issue, particularly to the "Tell Us What You Think" concerning a Wall Street Journal article by Jack Falvey that was highly critical of leadership training programs.)

Yes, Jack, there is no Santa Claus. When the top executives of a *Fortune* 100 company are sent to the wilderness to soak in the spas after a hard day swinging through the trees like corporate Tarzans, you have to wonder how grown men and women can justify the millions of dollars that are spent on such so-called leadership training.

Did Lincoln need a Ropes course to run for the presidency? Did Iacocca learn his stuff by playing "Lost on the Moon"?

As long as CEOs want quick fixes to manufacture corporate leaders, such off-the-wall (literally) training programs will continue to give serious OD work a bad name. HRD professionals must insist that leadership training be seen as part of the entire professional development plan for superior employees, not just a once-a-year, keep-'em-happy, Merry-Christmas kind of bonus.

Companies should not invest in leadership programs—they should invest in leadership. HRD professionals should know the difference.

Ellen Dowling
Professional Training Co.
Corrales, New Mexico

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703-683-8100

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I think Mr. Falvey is dead wrong! The leadership training he suggests is great, but it cannot work alone. Alone, it promotes only the status quo. When future leaders are trained by current ones, chances are that the leadership of a group or a company will remain the same, without any concern for what's going on around it. It promotes blindness.

I've worked for a *Fortune* 500 company for more than four years. My division's management follows a status-quo type of leadership. We haven't had a group or division meeting in over a year. The one meeting we've had in the last two years lasted 15 minutes—it was a lecture from management telling the employees what to do and allowed no participation. In short, it was not a meeting.

If that is the kind of leadership Mr. Falvey promotes, then he should work here, where morale, organization, and communication are perpetually poor.

Rather than letting the blind continuously lead the blind, companies should take a hard look at the kind of leadership they have and the kind they want. They need to define their requirements for good leadership and find reliable outside sources that can provide the necessary training and that understand dynamic leadership practices.

Leadership isn't something learned in 18 to 36 months. It is a continuing process that can always stand improvement. Good leaders should be aware of what their companies and employees need and expect. Good leaders should know when it's time to change, listen, act, and seek help.

Mr. Falvey has left society and people outside of his leadership realm. His view of leadership is good only for companies that employ robots, not for those that employ human resources.

Kimberly jt Herrick
Houston, Texas

The solution to Mr. Metz's torn magazine is simple [see "The Containment Issue" in "Issues," January 1989]. Simply send a complimentary copy to the Postmaster in Aurora, Colorado, at that zip code—that will make it the top copy on the pile.

Also, let me go on record as stating that Jack Falvey is right in his *Wall Street Journal* article.

Charles H. Kinney

CHK Sales Seminars and Workshops
Fayetteville, Georgia

Leadership training programs do not work when they teach management instead of leadership. Mr. Falvey and many others confuse managing skills with leading skills.

One noted observer of the management scene wrote recently: "So you want to be in charge, you want to make decisions, you want to be a leader, right?" Being in charge and making decisions are for people who want to be managers, not leaders. Managers formulate the goals of an organization and are accountable to the owners to accomplish them. Leaders represent the goals of their followers and are accountable to express them. Leaders frequently become managers when their followers ask them also to accomplish their goals.

Managers determine, organize, and direct programs, and make compromise among differing desires. Leaders deal in emotions, excite camaraderie and unity, and guide vague notions into concrete actions. And that's the difference between training a manager and training a leader.

Roger Plachy
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Leadership training deserves all the scrutiny Mr. Falvey suggests, with particular emphasis on the promise, the promise, and the practice of such programs. I believe that most

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of what happens during leadership programs is education rather than development and that education is an essential part of leadership growth. That is my premise. To promise more is unethical, and the practice must be true to the promise.

My position has developed over the five years I've managed, designed, and presented a vigorous leadership curriculum here at IDS Financial Services. Since 1984, hundreds of our field and home-office managers have taken a week-long series of leadership courses conducted by a faculty of their peers. Some very good things have happened.

Education has occurred. Managers have become teachers, a common leadership language has pervaded the firm, and there's a heightened awareness of the importance of leadership among both managers and employees.

I agree with Mr. Falvey that the courses themselves have produced no new leaders (except for the faculty). All participants, however, now have an educational framework to support them in their job experiences. To the extent that our graduates keep the discussion going with other leadership-program alumni and apply what they have learned to important work issues, I am confident that all this training will increase our organization's leadership excellence.

Tim Costello
IDS Financial Services, Inc.
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Ye gads! Mr. Falvey must have struck some raw nerves to receive comments by both *Training Magazine* and the *Journal* in the same month. Yet the result of the uproar has been a lot of heat and not much light.

Mr. Falvey is a consultant, and his motives, no doubt, include roiling the waters a little. After all, if leader-

ship can't be bought, then you just might need a consultant to help you create those "natural" breeding grounds for all those future rabbits—er—leaders. My firm works in both the consulting and the training arenas, so I have no axe to grind either way, except on the side of reason over emotion.

If the training community were more confident about its interventions in the leadership (and other) areas, I suspect that it would have dismissed Mr. Falvey's piece with light bemusement, as a maitre d' exhales calm contempt when approached by people without reservations. But Mr. Falvey cannot be treated in such a cavalier manner, because the training industry has not exactly been on the vanguard of intellectual debate, professional certification, or results validation. In fact, all too often it has been competing to sell clients the latest in hammers, even though the client's problems do not involve nails.

The times are changing and so are the components of excellent leadership, as they should. The mixture of skills, competencies, knowledge, and behaviors that makes a leader will probably continue to defy any simple application of grids and matrices. And I do know this: Michael Dukakis lost an election by claiming that it was about competence, which in truth may be purchased by the bushel. Leadership is what it's all about, and I doubt that one can acquire it only at a mentor's side or exclusively in a classroom. Any view of organizational America can tell you that.

Alan Weiss
Summit Consulting Group
East Greenwich, Rhode Island

I sympathize with your frustration in your letter ["Gaining the Competitive Edge Through Participation and Involvement" in "Issues," January 1989, about the need for more discussion on training and

development issues, as demonstrated by the lack of contributions to the "Issues" column]. It's a common problem in HRD today. I also appreciate Mr. Falvey's controversial comments to the effect that T&D is unnecessary. Many of us are raising the same question. The answers are found in two items that followed in the same issue in "In Practice" [see "High-Performance HRD Staffing" and "Engineering for the Future"]. We have to find ways to

- create high performance in our functions; and
- drive toward business goals established by our line managers, not esoteric HRD goals.

We won't continue to provide some of the comprehensive programs we did in the past. We will be tailoring ourselves to a greater service orientation, which means accepting rapid direction changes and short attention spans. At times, we express concern about short-sighted horizons and lack of long-term commitment, but we must cope better with rapidly changing competition and the "niche" marketing approach.

I'm happy to have your high-quality articles available to my staff, but like many readers, I simply skim most items quickly to see whether I'm up to date. What we really want are authors who describe a better result in half the time for half the cost—and in less than three paragraphs. Franz Kafka's goal was a complete book in 10 words. That is HRD's challenge and your authors'. Provide the short, controversial stuff, and I'll fill your "Issues" column.

David Crisp
Hudson's Bay Co.
Toronto, Ontario

Even taking things out of context, your quote from my article in the *Wall Street Journal* was totally accurate, and your comments fit with the tenor of the piece.

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What sparked my article (and tone) was a piece from the *New York Times* [see "Editor's Note"]. I researched and verified the facts and then did my writing. After publication of the piece, I received a lot of response and spent many hours on the phone being either lionized or beaten up.

The stuff that is being done by our profession and sold or delivered in the name of leadership training should be legally actionable as fraud in many cases.

The master/apprentice system, which has worked beautifully for (literally) centuries, need not be displaced by HRD, but should be polished and perfected by it.

I didn't even touch the new-age stuff.

Jack Falvey

Intermark

Londonderry, New Hampshire

[*Editor's Note: The New York Times article to which Mr. Falvey refers ("GM Bid to Rejuvenate Leadership") appeared in the business section on September 3, 1988. To build teamwork in the ranks, according to the article, GM believes it must improve the leadership of its managers, and so has hired a consulting firm to provide leadership training.*

With his letter, he enclosed articles related to leadership training and (other?) "soft" HRD issues, including a Wall Street Journal article by Peter Drucker titled "New Age Sessions Are Same Old Brainwashing" (February 9, 1989).]

The Military and HRD

(The following are in response to February's "Tell Us What You Think"—and accompanying letter from Raymond Belongie—concerning the HRD profession's receptivity of people with military HRD backgrounds.)

I'd like to offer the following to support Raymond Belongie's argument that HRD should not stereotype HRD professionals with military backgrounds.

For three years, AT&T Consumer Products has been engaged in a major transition from a bureaucratic organization—very similar to what Peter Block describes in *The Empowered Manager*—to a team of leaders committed to serving with distinction our customers, our owners, and our people. Along the way, we have worked with consultants with military backgrounds, who have been invaluable to us.

It has been my experience that the various arms of the military are pushing on the frontier of human performance, not lagging behind. Members of the military also have a bias for action and a genuine love of people. Both characteristics, I think, are fundamental to success in highly competitive markets in a fast-changing world.

Jeffrey N. McCollum

AT&T

Parsippany, New Jersey

I recently completed more than 20 years of military service, where I received two master's degrees. Similar to Mr. Belongie, I was involved with management training and counseling for the last 10 years of my career. I dealt with many of the same problems he must have encountered. I also expected some difficulty in finding a position, but not as much as I had. I wanted a clean break from the military and was looking for a position as a trainer in the civilian sector. I purposely wrote my resume so that it did not reek of a military background, but still ran into dead ends.

I would like to relate two instances. During an in-depth phone interview for a position with a Tennessee company, the recruiter finally asked me why I was looking for a

new position. I told her I was "retiring" from the Navy. Her comment was "Oh-h-h-h," which ended the interview, and I received a rejection letter a week later.

The second instance involved personal interviews with five people in a North Carolina-based company. One of the interviewers commented, "Well, you haven't been out of the service for six months yet." I asked him to explain, and he replied, "It takes about six months to get a job once you get out." That is the mentality that servicepeople have to contend with, the kind of mentality prevalent after World War II, when some people considered that the Marines should be left overseas—they were nothing but trained killers and had no place in American society.

Those were the only two interviews that exuded discrimination, though such discrimination is impossible to prove. By the same token, I would not want to work for a firm with that mindset.

I hope Mr. Belongie gets some honest responses to his letter. I will be surprised, though, to find any negative responses to the military experience. Most firms do not want to admit that they have animosity toward those who have served their country—that would be like being against Mom and apple pie. Behind closed doors, however, they will not accept military experience.

The firm for which I now work does not feel that way, and I wish more firms felt the same. The military offers a wealth of information and experience. Civilian companies also need to remember that the military person is the one who protects the freedom that allows the free-enterprise system to continue. All the military person desires is a chance to demonstrate his or her knowledge and experience.

Vernon M.W. Wells

Summerville, South Carolina

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Gender Reprise

Your "Editorial Note" to Ms. Keller's letter ["Gender Specifying," February 1989] misses the point entirely.

Your defense of your use of "man" as "the noun that denotes the species" is lazy, at best. I believe the actual term is *homo sapiens*. You admit that you could have worked around it, so why didn't you?

I think you will agree that language shapes thoughts and feelings. Women have been trying for ages to overcome the language of *man* and the barriers it has created. Almost every word that describes our gender has some reference to "man" in it somewhere (e.g., *woman*, *female*). Even words that supposedly describe both sexes are decidedly sexist (e.g., *human*, *mankind*). Why was "man" used to define the species in the first place? My guess is that some man thought it up, and woman wasn't enlightened enough to protest.

It may be awkward, but give some thought as to how awkward it is for a female of the species constantly to be referred to as *Man*, in any way, shape, or form. There is man, and there is woman—two separate but equal words, two separate but equal genders.

O.K., enough chastisement—I know what you meant. But I think I can speak for many women when I say that we will not be satisfied until we can come up with a different word for describing this gender of ours. I wish I had that magic word, but the English language is an amalgamation of so many different languages that we can't be limited.

Kari Soiney-Knapp
San Francisco, California

Polybag Reprise

This is in reference to your use of polybags in mailing. I am concerned about the bag's biodegradability and its subsequent effects on our environment. I feel that the practice of using polybags is not so necessary that you cannot use covers that have a less detrimental environmental effect.

I strongly urge you to discontinue the use of plastics, as *Science* magazine has done.

William F. Grossnickle
East Carolina University
Greenville, North Carolina

As the official publication of the American Society for Training and Development, which prides itself on its endeavors to improve human relations and to keep its members informed of national issues (one of which must be the significant problem of waste disposal), mailing the *Journal* in a plastic wrapper sends the wrong message.

As members of this very important organization, we must care about pollution. The problem of plastic wrappers may seem minor compared to the others that face the environment, but we must all be aware of how our actions will affect the planet our children will inherit. "Every litter bit hurts," and it hurts especially when it is not biodegradable.

Future generations will thank you, as I do, for considering a return to the regular method of distributing our fine publication.

E.R. Carlson
Educational Resources Co.
Norcross, Georgia

[Editor's Note: New postal regulations went into effect in March that make polybagging (at least for our purposes) a moot issue. In brief, the

regulation will make it more difficult and more expensive for us (and other magazines) to include loose, paid advertising with the magazine (which is why we have polybagged in the past)—we would have to pay first- or third-class postage on those items rather than second-class. Some of us are a bit ashamed that it is a question of money, but there you have it. If in the future we decide to use plastic wrapping, we have made arrangements to use a new "biodegradable" plastic.]

Addendum

For the article "Respecting Beliefs and Values" [January 1989], we listed five people—Frank Basler, Geoff Bellman, Peggy Hutcheson, Pat McLagan, and Bob Stump—as members of the Woodlands Group and authors of the article. The Group has nine other members, however, all of whom contributed in important ways to the piece. They are Boyce Appel, Forrest Belcher, Paul Gustavson, Ned Herrmann, Bonnie Kasten, Larry Lottier Jr., Mac McCullough, Carlene Reinhart, and Mavis Wilson. We would like to thank them all for an outstanding article.



"Issues" is compiled and edited by Eric R. Blume. Send your viewpoints to Issues, Training & Development Journal, 1630 Duke Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.