

TRAINING THE ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED

BY DAPHNE
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In the aftermath of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Civil Rights movement, several things are manifestly clear:

1. The inalienable rights of the majority have not been eroded, nor have minorities even begun to approach economic parity with the majority of Americans.

2. Although there have been signal gains, mostly by middle and upper class members of minorities, for poor or disadvantaged people, the outlook is at best, the same and in some instances, as dismal as it was before the events in Selma and Memphis and the repercussive civil disturbances in Detroit and other major cities.

A closer view at disadvantage-ment appears to allow for the formulation of certain axioms. Some are:

1. Eventually, all segments of the society are affected by deprivation in one part. Three examples of how advantaged persons may be affected are:

a. The individual may be in-

involved personally as a consequence of criminal acts resulting from rage, however misdirected.

b. Trafficking in drugs, used to support people who can find no other sources of income may eventually filter into schools and other institutions where more vulnerable individuals can be found.

c. One may face the necessity of having to pay higher taxes for social services that result from the pathological sequela of poverty.

2. It is therefore in the self-interest of those in power, such as government and business, to make concerted efforts to bring the economically disadvantaged into the mainstream of society.

The goal would seem simple: *to provide more jobs for the disadvantaged*. Resolution of such a goal, however, must take into account the following:

- The disadvantaged usually lack marketable skills and are poorly educated.

- Certain psychological attributes may be concomitant with

disadvantage-ment since a major tenet of Social Science is that the human personality varies with the condition to which it must adapt. Research studies point to a relationship between the economic circumstances of an individual and its impact on mental and physical well-being.

- Some negative characteristics generally associated with the economically disadvantaged are:

- Poor employment history personally or in the family
- Low self-esteem
- Little motivation and inadequate coping skills
- Unhealthy psychological and emotional outlook
- Untapped and undeveloped cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills
- Academic underachievement

These descriptors show variation in the training populations but more often, economically disadvantaged minorities, the majority of which include Blacks, Hispanics and sometimes, persons with physical handicaps repeatedly show evidence of these traits.

This article relates the experi-

ence of a training program sponsored by business that has been adjudged to be successful. It is given in the hope that the model can provide useful insights into other training approaches and philosophies. The lessons learned would seem to have universal application in programs of this nature.

The Experience

Three factors contributing to the dismal outlook of the economically disadvantaged are the economy, the history of economic disadvantage and race discrimination. Over the past five years, the sagging and grim reality of the economy has been an issue with which to content. The economic growth of the nation has been dwindling and the ability of businesses to generate employment has equally suffered. Thus, unemployment has been steadily rising and the lower economic strata of society are where the impact is felt most. In Michigan, for example, total unemployment in the state was about 7.8 percent in 1979 — 6.6 percent for Whites and 16.2 percent for

Non-Whites.

Among the youth, the figures are startling. In 1979, total youth unemployment was 15.8 percent — 35.2 percent for Non-Whites as compared to 13.8 percent for Whites. This is against 1979 national unemployment averages of 5.8 percent for total — 5.1 percent for Whites as compared to 11.3 percent for Non-Whites. National youth unemployment stood at 16.1 percent — 13.9 percent for Whites and 33.5 percent for Non-Whites — indicating a small difference between national and state figures.

The persistence of unemployment is explained by a multitude of causes. Some of these are:

- The entry of women in significant numbers into the labor market. In 1978, the labor force repeatedly grew by 3 million of whom 1.9 million were women and only 400,000 of them were Black women.

- The illegal but lingering racial discrimination that makes total assimilation into the marketplace difficult.

- Low-level jobs once held by

Blacks are now held by aliens.

But the unemployment issue is a much older problem — a more ingrained societal concern that dates back to movement of Blacks from the agricultural South to the industrial North, a society for which they were inadequately prepared in terms of literacy and other marketable employment skills. In addition, with the rapid advancement of technology, the need for manpower with marginal skills was significantly reduced. Thus, historically, because of the skill limitations and, therefore, poor employment records, minorities have not been favored in the employment market. Further, there have been instances of job and training mismatching when persons are trained for certain careers and jobs for which there are no jobs available.

The Needs of the Trainee

Contrary to the belief that economically disadvantaged persons are often satisfied with their state of unemployment and have little desire to work, there is empirical evidence to negate that statement. From training experiences, it is confirmed that one of the foremost goals of the disadvantaged is to search for remunerative activity that can attend to even a short-term desire. The opportunity for meaningful activity is evident in trainees' efforts that call for supports and resources to help them adapt, rehabilitate so as to become socially integrated in the society. Concerns of the trainee exhibit need to:

- Provide remunerative employment or activity that meet immediate gratification needs.

- provide training and skills that will prepare him/her for new employment opportunities.

- improve social interaction and communication skills to help interpersonal relationships in multi-purpose settings.

- identify personal strengths and weaknesses.

- increase awareness of need for goal attainment.

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between Chrysler Learning Inc. and a given prime sponsor. The trainees can be either recruited by Chrysler Learning Inc. itself or be referrals of the prime sponsor directly.

The training programs fall under two major program types: 1) Adult and 2) Youth. Under each category, one or a composition of services is available (Figure 1.). The services span: outreach and recruitment, eligibility and certification, testing, motivational counseling, remedial education, English as a second language, hands-on training, supportive services and job development, placement and follow-up. Several options avail according to the specification of the contract. The trainee may be a referral from the prime sponsor for assessment or counseling and may then be referred to other agencies for other types of training.

To qualify for participation in Chrysler Learning Inc.'s program, trainees must meet the government and contracting agencies' eligibility criteria. Orientation familiarizes clients with objectives and procedures of the program and a

process of intake and enrollment is conducted with the necessary forms and with thorough assessment procedures to match aptitudes and achievement levels with specific program requirements. Each trainee is individually studied and evaluated to determine the need for supportive services such as legal assistance, and health care. In case of such needs, the trainee is referred to selected and appropriate sources for help.

In the youth programs, there is a heavy emphasis on career exploration and awareness and GED completion. Youth, particularly high school drop-outs, are encouraged to improve their scores through ABE/GED programs while also acquiring work experience. A recent development in the youth area is the Goal-Directed Group Counseling and Career Development model that has been specially created to address the needs of in-school youth populations. It is believed that if these targeted school populations are carefully trained in terms of occupations and careers, their opportunities at employment are signifi-

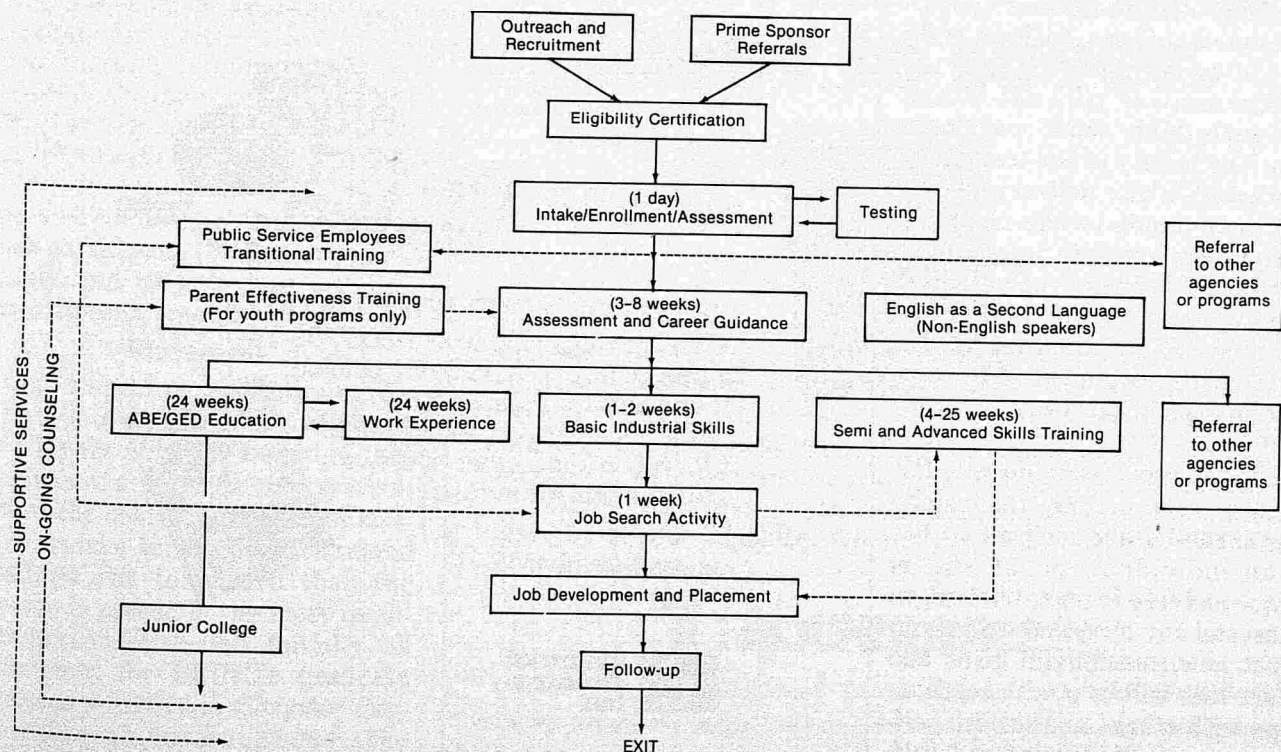
cantly increased. The model directs efforts at broad but intensive exposure of youth to careers and occupations available to them today through highly structured career awareness, exploration, planning and decision-making sessions. The program is operated in Junior and Senior High Schools. It is conceptualized to be incorporated into a school year curriculum with provisions made to progress students from Junior High School level through Senior year and movement into post-secondary education or employment.

In adult programs, trainees are provided with more opportunities at gaining skills in the highly technical specialized skills programs. Chrysler Learning Inc.'s experiences are based on four major successes:

1. Goal-directed group counseling — occupational awareness and attitudinal orientation to the world of work
2. Practical hands-on work training
3. Job placement
4. Continuous counseling through training, placement and follow-up

Figure 1

CURRENT COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING MODEL FOR YOUTH AND ADULT — CHRYSLER LEARNING, INC.



Goal-Directed Group Counseling

At the core of the training exercise is an evolutionary philosophy that emerged from a repertoire of counseling techniques and theories, aimed at ultimate behavior modification. Goal-Directed Group Counseling is a pragmatic, people-oriented, need-centered approach that builds on the assumption that man is rational and that the onus of responsibility in the outcome of life lies in their hands. Thus, through intensive motivation the individual is encouraged to recognize, explore and develop his or her potential to the fullest in a cooperative group setting. The aim is to aid with the structural and functional dimensions of the individual within a given social system.

Within the counseling framework, the intent is to modify self-defeating behaviors and reinforce positive attitudes. Peer pressure is also intentionally elicited to effect the process of behavior change. However, the central parameters of training revolve around work readiness skills. Training is essentially for preparation for work or in other cases, especially in-school youth, career preparation.

In recognition of the deficiencies, the disadvantaged are instructed about the development of practical life skills, communication and interpersonal abilities, decision-making and problem-solving and the establishment of personal attainable goals both short and long-term. The beauty of the training is manifested in the delivery of key employer needs to the trainees that underscores and promotes regular attendance, punctuality, sound work habits and knowledge of industrial and business standards and developing healthy work relationships in the work environment.

With the repeated failures in the school or home setting, the trainee is awakened to the realization that as an individual, he or she is unique and free to make choices, to transcend any hindrances and construct new, meaningful goals and values that will help with relationships with others to establish self-acceptance, self-identity and self-actualization.

Role-playing is a major feature of the training curriculum. The trainee is apt to leave the training sessions with a more positive self-image, in control of his life and mentally recalling: "I will be successful because I am responsible for my own success."

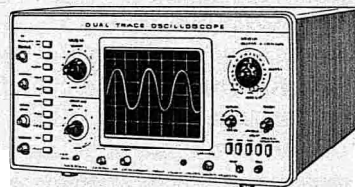
The motivational counseling is offered in a two to three-week package though there have been occasions when the training lasted up to eight weeks (handicapped training). This is the point where parents are encouraged to partici-

pate for the youth programs especially. At this phase, also, the curriculum is integrated with the English as a second language curriculum for non-English speakers.

In continuation of the training process, exposure and experience in skills training is equally important. The Goal-Directed Group Counseling is a guiding philosophy in this phase of training, also. In a simulated industrial environment, trainees experience hands-on basic industrial skills for about one to two weeks where they acquaint

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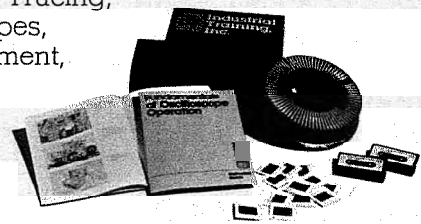
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themselves with tool usage and a variety of manufacturing processes that will eventually help in placement. This phase of training is intended to deliver skills and knowledge that will enhance the trainee's vocational potential. Various specialized aptitude tests are administered to determine suitability for participant employability in specific skill areas in order to match skills and interests with job requirements. Given the individual inclination and with the contractual options available, the trainee can have the benefit of a variety of semi-skill and advanced skill offerings. These skill areas are carefully selected to match the current employment needs. Among the offerings which have a five to 25-week duration, there are: welding, automotive mechanics and repair, drafting, electronics, fork lift operation, machine operator and set up, power sewing and custodial maintenance.

In some of these occupational areas, on-the-job training monies are available through Chrysler Learning Inc. for employers for up to 50 percent of client's wage while the trainee is in training at an employer's location.

Trainees with underachieving academic scores receive remedial education help to enable them to bring scores up to desirable levels required for participation in the specific skills-training program. Regular trainee evaluation is aimed at helping the trainee direct his/her efforts to the task at hand. Additional counseling known as "parallel counseling" is provided to each participant to reinforce skills taught and to help him/her succeed through training.

Placement

An integral part of training for Chrysler is the placement effort. It is a highly developed system that consists of a job bank that systematizes the search for the most suitable trainee for each job. Trained staff go out to ensure that the person is placed is the most qualified person for the job. Initially, all placement for CLINC's graduate trainees was within Chrysler Corporation plants but today, the graduates secure employment not

only with goods-producing but increasingly in service-producing industries mainly in the unsubsidized sector.

On-going counseling is done both individually and in groups throughout the process of training. It is structured to begin after the client is accepted and enrolled in the program and to end during post placement. One of its foremost objectives is to reinforce individual or group goals and also to assist with problem-solving, career guidance and personal growth of each client. The trainees receive counseling that teaches them to handle their problems successfully whether in training or on-the-job through effective application of problem-solving and other communication and interpersonal skills imparted during training.

The populations that have been served by Chrysler Learning Inc. are:

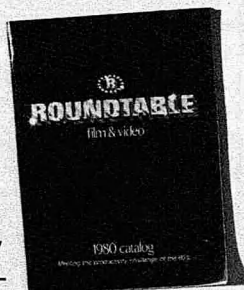
- adults
- youth (in-school, out-of-school, drop-outs)

- displaced homemakers
- veterans
- racial minorities
- handicapped (blind, deaf, end-stage renal dialysis)
- females
- non-English speakers
- offenders
- ex-offenders
- substance abusers

In 1974-1976, males predominated the program; in 1977, this disparity seemed to level off but by 1979, there was a decrease in the numbers of women enrolled. The ages of the enrollees were concentrated in the 18 to 21 age range between 1974 to 1976; by 1977, the population became older — a greater percentage was concentrated in the 22 to 44 age range.

The majority of the program enrollees possessed a nine to 11th grade education and below. 1979 was the exception; more than half of the trainees had a high school diploma. Over the course of study, the population was overwhelmingly Black. The percentage of offen-

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ders in the program has been fairly steady with a dip in 1977 and 1979. Veterans constitute a small minority of the trainee population.

Men had more success in being placed than women. This was the trend from 1974 to 1979. But from 1977 to 1979, the margin widened significantly. Males had on the average a 15 percent more success rate at placement than women.

Between 1974 to 1979, placement was consistently better for the 22 to 44 and 45 to 54 age groups than for those 18 to 21 years old — 1976 was most significant. On the other hand, 1977 was the best year for placement of the 19 to 21 and the worst for 18-year-olds.

High school graduates repeatedly and expectedly have better chances at securing employment. The years 1976 and 1979 were outstanding for high school graduate placements.

Between 1976 and 1979, there was little difference in the placement success of trainees with less than a high school diploma. A trainee with a sixth grade educa-

tion and one with a 10th had almost an equal chance at placement. Figures for Post-High School Graduates show fluctuations in placement success.

Training the Economically Disadvantaged

The following nine areas have been identified as critical components for training the economically disadvantaged according to the experiences of Chrysler Learning Inc.

A. Content of Training

- Direct training activities to practice rather than theory.

- Be sensitive to trainee needs and create programs to serve those needs.

- Be highly selective of the training skills to ensure that there is a demand in the employer's market.

- Create program offerings that encourage cognitive, affective and psychomotor growth.

- Enrich training with hands-on experience, remedial education and other supplementary training aids.

- Provide communication skills

that improve interpersonal relationships in multi-purpose settings.

- Develop practical life skills essential to functioning as productive citizens — resume writing, reading ads in the newspaper, filling in applications. . . .

- Orient clients to effective goal attainment.

- Assess trainees' vocational aptitudes and interests to determine a chosen vocation or career.

- Complement group counseling with individual counseling to address the more personal concerns of the trainee.

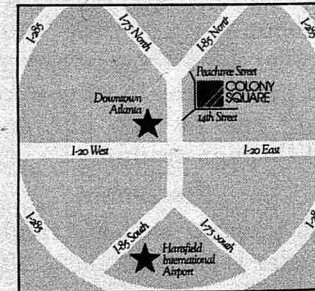
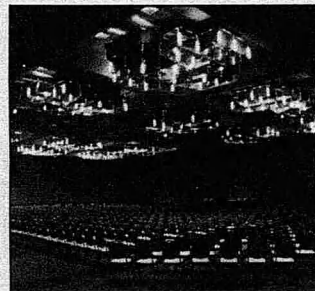
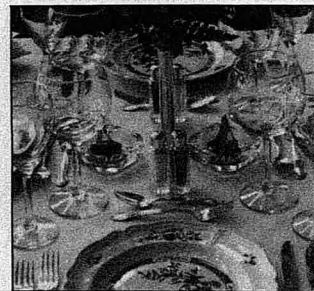
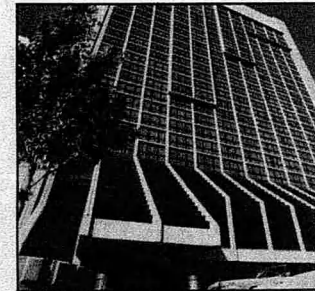
B. Staff Training and Selection

- Staff must be selected for special sensitivity attributes that speak to trainees' needs.

- Make the counselor a facilitator/model type that focuses more on the trainee than on the counseling process — a supportive rather than a dominant role within a group.

- Make staff cognizant that each trainee, even with emotional and

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psychological handicaps, has a wealth of untapped potential.

- Conduct staff development and training on a regular basis. Because of the critical nature of interaction between staff and trainee, communication techniques must be a part of their repertoires.

- Staff must not be "social types" but trainers with some knowledge of the employment scene and particularly concerned with employability of trainees.

C. Trainee Awareness

- Increase the general social awareness of the trainees.

- Orient the trainees' expectations toward success — success not only on the job but in personal life.

- Encourage the trainee to work toward an understanding of himself/herself.

- Train and counsel each trainee that one's future lies in his/her own hands — the success in life depends on him/her.

D. Employer Needs

- Match the needs of the employers' market with those of the clients.

- Identify more varied job sites with better training possibilities and possible long-term job openings.

- Make provision for occupational field trips/work site visits to expose trainees to the employment districts in the geographical locale.

- Develop linkages with organizations and institutions such as trade associations, business and labor organizations, technical schools and institutions of higher education to familiarize or transition program graduates.

- Intensify efforts to familiarize employers with profile of clients and CETA programs and demonstrate the potential use and service of such clients of their operations.

E. Family Involvement

- Involve trainees' family members in the training process to win their support and reinforce need for training. An "Open House" idea is a favorable and acceptable way to invite family, particularly parents of youth in youth programs.

- Elicit support of trainees' family members during the training process.

F. Training Aids

- Provide the most critical supportive services to trainees. These services should help with problems that have immediate impact on the physical well-being — optical, medical, etc.

- Remedial education if implemented must be linked with employment or have practical functions — not just education for education's sake.

- Skills training programs lasting from five weeks on, must make provision for counseling that provides clients with feedback and progress evaluation and help to encourage clients to complete program.

G. Evaluation

- Develop procedures and guidelines for regular evaluation of programs. Such an evaluation should be geared toward measurement of initial objectives and stated program criteria.

- Program evaluation must be undertaken before the program commences so that the full dimensions of the program may be taken into consideration.

- Experimental training programs that may have implications for replication in other states should be evaluated not only by an in-house evaluation team but also by a third party evaluation team.

- Evaluation is critical to the training process. Besides program evaluation, staff evaluation as part of the training process is also necessary.

- Encourage input of trainees into the structure of the program. Such inputs can be solicited during the evaluation process.

H. Intake and Enrollment

- Always familiarize trainees with the objectives and procedures of the specific training program during the intake and enrollment phase. This exposure can eliminate misconceptions and solidify their interest in the program.

- During the orientation, discuss rationale, program length, location, hours of training, allowances, program components, nature of placement potential and performance and behavior expectations.

I. Youth Programs

- Attend to the specialized problems of the youth populations by designing curricula offerings that will address their particular needs. Out-of-school youth may have different needs from in-school youth.

- Make the training more relevant for in-school youth by providing sharper focus on career development and employment preparation.

- Offer on-site work experience and relevant field trips with the training.

Today

Chrysler Learning Inc. is a subsidiary of Chrysler Corporation. During the unemployment crisis of the '60s, it responded with programs for the hard-to-employ. These programs have mushroomed into an organization whose services are implemented both locally and nationally. Initially, it placed all trainees within Chrysler plants but later because of financial constraints within the Company, Chrysler Learning Inc. moved its placement outside of the corporation. Today, the department's placements have moved from industrial into predominantly service sector.

For supporting charts and graphs diagramming the concepts in this article write: Training and Development Journal, Dept. C, P. O. Box 5307, Madison, WI 53705.

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