

# OD Strategy For Today's Training

new era demands more of trainers

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The W.T. Grant Company has become a huge market force in big ticket merchandising and sales since seriously entering the competition in the mid-sixties. One of the concerns of management along with the decision to develop lines of furniture, appliances and T.B.A. for sales emphasis was, "Who is going to sell this merchandise?"

A sales training program was begun at the same time the new product lines were introduced. It was an excellent program to train "big ticket" merchandise salespersons. The correct methods of training and measurement were utilized and tangible results in sales, profits and personnel turnover showed the cost of the program to be a profit generating expenditure.

During the initial years of the products' introduction into the merchandise line, most of the departments were small and did not justify full-time sales/departmental management. With time, however, lines were expanded and the departments grew. Smaller stores were made larger, even larger stores were built, and the W.T. Grant market share and penetration became more and more significant. Today, departmental management is one of the key features in the remarkably successful history of these lines in the company.

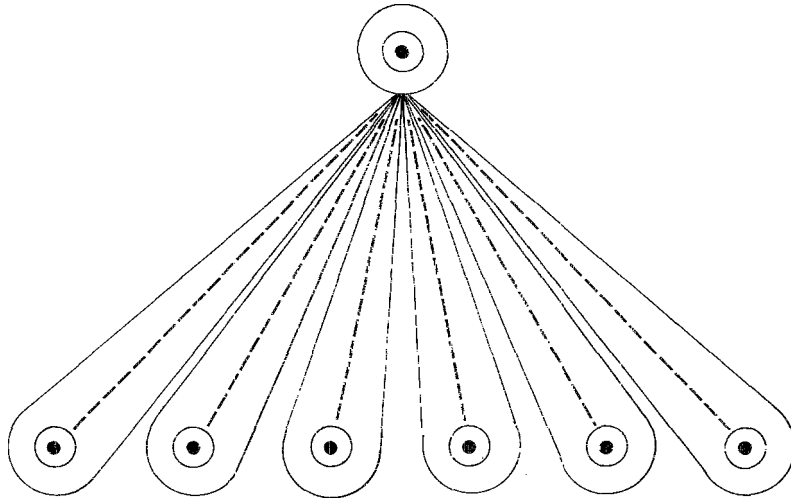
## Training Program Changes

Department size began to justify individual managers for small groups of salespersons as the com-

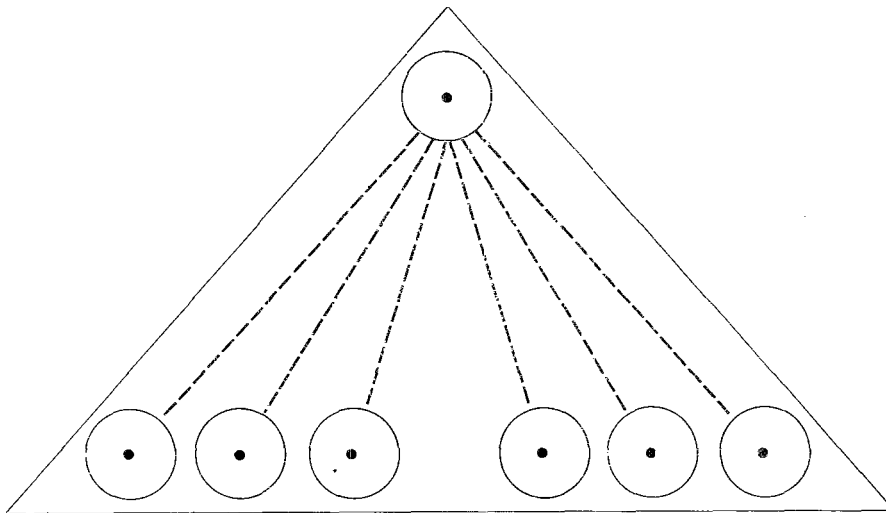
pany moved from the sixties to the seventies. The new managers brought with them new needs which showed up in three areas: salesmanship, sales training, and supervision. These newly identified needs led to drastic changes in the training program and content. And as the training program and content evolved to help the managers in each of these areas, it continued to yield excellent results.

Another evolutionary change is on the horizon for 1975. Departments have continued to grow larger as stores have grown still larger and as suburban locations containing dense populations have demanded broader and deeper inventories of merchandise. Sales continue to leap forward and now

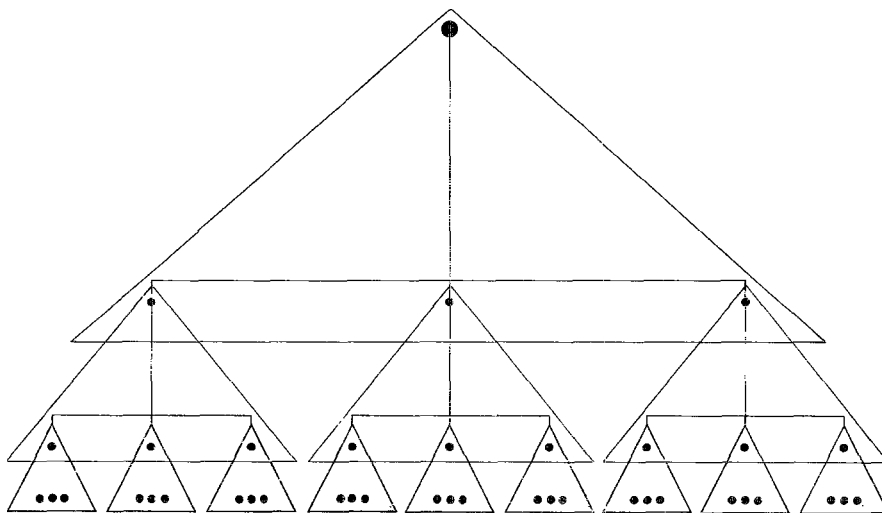
**Exhibit 1.**  
The Man-To-Man Pattern of Organization



**Exhibit 2.**  
The Group Pattern of Organization



**Exhibit 3.**  
The Overlapping Group Pattern of Organization



the appliance department is the largest one in the \$2 billion company. Unfortunately, this growth is now paralleled by a recession of serious social, economic and political consequence. Unemployment is soaring, inflation saps the buying power of the masses, and retail sales soften in the face of and as a direct result of these pressures.

So in 1975 and into the foreseeable future, those who have the responsibility for demonstrating that training is profitable must be certain and precise within a hair's breadth that training efforts do get to the "DO IT" stage.

### OD Can Help

Frank Goble, in his *Excellence in Leadership*, published in 1972, describes three types of organizational approaches.<sup>1</sup> He concludes that the overlapping group or coordinated team approach can be a tremendously important tool for the leader. And the overlapping coordinated team approach can facilitate the accomplishment of the major goals of "DOING IT" and accountability for performance. This concept is a highly objective method of organization and coordination, and taps powerful motivational forces as well.

Exhibits 1, 2 and 3 are from *Excellence in Leadership*. It is easy to see that the manager using the traditional person-to-person organization has failed to perceive organization as a dynamic system. He or she meets with one manager at a time making decisions related only to that function and only to that individual. This method is time consuming, inefficient, and uncoordinated.

Illustrated in Exhibit 2 is the team pattern of organization as it might exist at a given level of authority. The leader or manager and his or her team members or workers, meet together on a regularly scheduled basis and relate to

each other and work as a unit so that a team is formed both in individual relationships and group philosophy. This is the form that each subordinate team will take as it is a part of a larger operating unit.

### Overlapping Group Teamwork

In the overlapping group form of organization as seen in Exhibit 3, teams at various levels in the structure or unit overlap. In actual practice, the span of control would make the number of individuals greater at each level but this illustration communicates the point well.

Using the coordinated team approach, each salesperson will be accountable to his or her department manager who is also the team leader. The department manager will hold regular meetings for specified periods of time. These team meetings will be held at least weekly, and they will be used for various types of instruction including actual stand-up training based in experience related role playing. The meeting will also be used for individual communicating, planning and conduct of goal seeking activities.

The manager of this team is a member of an overlapping team consisting of other department managers in this unit. The higher level team manager may be the store manager or a middle level manager in larger stores. And so the entire operating unit, as well as the smaller individual operating units that make up the larger one, is highly coordinated using this overlapping group team approach.

### Objectives and Results

The specific objective which we want the teamwork organizational design to facilitate is to "KEEP THE TRAINING MOVING." In our meetings, the managers are exposed to a comprehensive sales plan. Some will use it as they sell part-time. Others, however, who do no personal selling, will not use it in this way at all. But each and

every one of them must train it, evaluate it, adapt it, adjust it and supervise it. And each manager is entirely accountable for his or her results. Each manager is accountable for individual performance and for departmental performance. It is vital and absolutely essential that the training be most effective to get the greatest results and should be carried through to the "DO IT" stage.

In addition to facilitating the reaching of the performance goals which will satisfy the accountability standard, the overlapping teamwork concept application should yield several other very desirable benefits:

- \* Bring about planned organizational change.
- \* Establish clear playing field boundaries and game rules.
- \* Specify tasks and assign accountability to individual team members.
- \* Emphasize the human aspect of business and systems.
- \* Recognition of each individual, thus encouraging perpetuation and self-renewal.
- \* Reduce interpersonal conflict and friction.
- \* Emphasize experience based behavior.
- \* Engender esprit de corps, morale as one for all, all for one.
- \* Provide a method for easy flow of information and communication, up and down, back and forth, and across.
- \* Lend direction to decision making.

### New Era Demands More

We are in a new era, socially and economically. The time appears near when industry may be spending as much to educate its employees as the country spends to educate its youth. More and more demands will be placed on training and trainers. And at the same time, training and related activities are easy targets for cost saving in periods of slow economic growth.

Consequently, we must use methods and devices that represent the most modern technology and that yield highly positive, measurable results. The results must be profit performance based, too. We believe these kinds of goals are obtainable and are made possible in this particular situation by the modern organizational design and development technique of overlapping group team work.

### REFERENCES

1. Goble, Frank, *Excellence in Leadership*, The American Management Association, Inc., New York, 1972, pp. 40-42.

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