

From Florida State University . . .

Training Staffs Need Help

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Just three short years ago, the Professional Standards Committee, ASTD, (Harry S. Belman and John E. Blik)¹ made a study of the status and functions of training departments in business, industry, and government. One of their many conclusions pointed out that training positions include a very wide variety of assignments. These may include such special assignments as conference leading, apprentice coordination, manual writing and preparing instructional materials, supervisor training, methods development, developing and preparing instructional aids.

This study also disclosed that full time training staffs tend to be limited in number, even in quite large organizations. While a considerable proportion of the administrators of industrial training programs spend some time in instructing, it is obvious that the real backbone of the training program is the staff of individuals who do the major share of the instructing. These men or women have been called upon to instruct because of their particular qualification in some subject or area. More often than not, however, they are lacking in the particular abilities necessary to impart their

skills and knowledge to others effectively. These are the skills of teaching industrial subjects, and cannot simply be ignored by those administrators of training programs as "nice to know, but not really essential."

Limited Training Staffs

Since training staffs tend to be limited in numbers, it requires more than a Herculean effort to accomplish all of the things which are necessary for a competent and effective training program. Certainly no single training director or small staff can possibly be considered competent to teach all things or do all things in a training program. Help of all kinds must be secured. No help can be more fruitful, however, than help and instruction for the instructors who are or will be teaching in the training program.

In most industrial training situations, it would be impractical to suggest that each of the instructors be given a complete college-level industrial teaching methods course, involving various textbooks and hours and hours of study and classroom work in preparation for instructing in the plant program. It would,

1. Belman, Harry S. and Blik, John E. "The Internal Organization of the Training Function," *Journal of the ASTD*, September 1959, p. 44.

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of course, be ideal if all of our instructors could be competent, well-trained and experienced teachers as well as being competent mechanics, craftsmen, or operators. Since such training is usually impractical due to time limitations, something else must be devised to take its place.

How common it is to take competent skilled personnel and ask them to instruct new or transferred employees in their particular skill areas, with little more than a few brief oral instructions about how to instruct! "If we can't have well-trained instructors, we'll just have to 'make-do' with what we have." What a defeatist attitude for a training director or staff to take. Instead, let's go find some help for the situation. Let's get some real professional assistance, and with a short, concise, "real-meat" course, train those we want to be instructors in the rudimentary but necessary skills.

Help Available

One solution is to turn to industrial teacher trainers in our colleges and universities. These are experienced industrial men who are experts at taking skilled industrial personnel and helping them to become top-flight instructors. Many universities presently provide services of this type, at little cost to the individuals, business, or industry receiving the help. Still others will be willing to set up specialized short courses or units of instruction *if* they are asked. With the tremendous number of students in our public schools and colleges, most university departments of industrial education have their hands pretty full trying to prepare sufficient numbers of teachers for the public school industrial

shop training programs. They are thus somewhat reluctant to search for an additional work load by advertising the fact that they can be of great assistance to individual companies, in their training problems and programs.

University industrial teacher trainers can be of tremendous help to many types of organizations, by custom-designing a short, intensive, *non-credit* course for each needy situation. By making the courses non-credit, the red tape of university admissions, regulations, rules, policies, and approvals can be eliminated, allowing the scheduling and content to be geared to fit each individual case. Training of this type for industry is offered by many prominent institutions of higher learning all over the country. Such short courses may be of whatever length necessary in order to accomplish the desired aims. Common schedules are for ten, fifteen, twenty, or thirty hours of intensive instruction. Florida State University, for example, offers two such week-long courses designed as basic and advanced training for industrial personnel. Other schools throughout the country offer similar services to industry, such as the University of Texas, Indiana University, Wayne University, Penn State University, and countless others.

Tailored Content

Many problems confront the skilled person who has been asked to instruct. It is highly unlikely that he will be handed a beautifully prepared course of instruction to follow. Some of the larger industrial organizations have done commendable work toward this, but it is the exception rather than the rule. Usually,

the information and materials used in the training program must be developed by the staff themselves. Thus short instructor-training courses not only must cover methods of teaching, but also of necessity must include principles and training for many other situations and problems faced by instructors.

Typical topics which are often included in short courses are: course outline preparation, sources of content for instruction, planning units of instruction, trade or occupational analysis techniques, motivation of learners, principles of learning, techniques of presenting subject matter, discussion techniques, chalk-board techniques, making and using audio-visual aids, instructing through assignments and tests, development and use of instruction sheets, lesson planning, measurement and evaluation through tests and shop and classroom management. To some, these topics may sound overly academic, and perhaps too inclusive. This conclusion, however, is quite erroneous. Instructor training in many of the above listed topics can be accomplished rapidly and effectively when handled properly. Much use must be made of prepared materials distributed for discussion, which give practical examples of the principles under discussion. These also serve as resource and reference materials at a later time. Rudimentary ideas and principles can be presented in an amazingly short time, provided supplementary help by the full-time training director or his staff follows.

Training Instructors Pays

Instructor training can properly be conducted on company time, just as any employee training is given at the expense

of the company. That it pays off in dollars and cents, in reduced training time, in more efficiently trained employees, and in reduced mistakes and waste, has been proven over and over again. Most of the major companies in the country are continuously expanding their training services in order to become more efficient.

Skill in teaching is needed by all those called upon to instruct, not just those with little formal education. This has little bearing upon the acquisition of such skills. For example, Bell Telephone operates a school for newly-employed graduate engineers, to teach them about Bell's specific problems and equipment. Recently, they asked an industrial teacher trainer from a nearby state university to teach their instructors (all graduate engineers) how to teach more effectively.

Training of your instructors really pays off. Do not expect them to magically become good instructors simply by having them read a pamphlet or book which you hand them. In your training program, the teaching skills of your instructors are equally as important as their manipulative and technical knowledge. It has been said that Albert Einstein would not have made a good teacher — that he was so brilliant that it was difficult for him to see where others were having difficulty with a problem. Teaching others does require training and skill. Seeking assistance through specialized departments in nearby colleges and universities is one very effective method of improving your training program effectiveness. Seek such help and the results will be very worthwhile. Help your instructors become the top flight instructors that they are striving to be.