



The Market for HRD in Brazil

Success in HRD overseas demands more than just cultural awareness. Gaining an insight into people's needs is a strict prerequisite.

By CAROLE FAULMAN MARTINO

At first glance, American HRD intervention in another country may seem wrongheaded and certain to fail. On the other hand, why allow a less technologically developed country to repeat old mistakes, mistakes that other countries have made and for which they've found solutions? In order to decide, it's important to take note of your situation.

Our usual *prima facie* nonacceptance of foreign theories reminds me of the shoe salesman who went to a town in the back country of the Amazonas. He sent a telex to his boss in Sao Paulo: "No market for shoe sales here. People walk barefoot."

The salesman soon returned to Sao Paulo, but somehow his boss was reluctant to give up the cause. He sent another salesman. After a few days, the second salesman sent an urgent telex: "Send 4,000 pairs of shoes, working and dress types, unsophisticated models, in varied sizes, immediately. The people here have *nothing* to put on their feet and the market is *fertile*."

How observant and sensitive to human needs! But who can judge if the market is fertile? That takes more than just statistics; it takes a "feeling" that is possible only when you live as the average person in whose country you reside, outside a colony of foreigners like yourself. A company will be able to build its credibility only if it acts in light of this obvious, but often overlooked, conclusion. Each year, multinational corporations discover a greater need for knowl-

edgeable nationals or long-time, highly integrated, nonnative residents.

Our company represents training film companies based in the United States and Canada. We have access to magnificent, well-planned films developed for the business and industry, and higher education markets. Many times I receive material that has to be put on the shelf because it addresses a problem with which we are not yet faced. At other times, we consider a film at length, handling it far differently than it would be in its home market, because *our* people are South Americans and, more specifically, Brazilians. Their language and thought patterns are different; their cultural patterns unique. The level of ambition and self-image is specific to this population. All this must be considered before we launch new material on the market.

Culture is multidimensional. In a country like Brazil, we could actually divide the market into five geographic areas and still not fully sort out its needs. The northeast, north, west and south certainly cannot be treated in the same way as Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. These last two states are in a pattern of development unlike the rest of Brazil. In fact, if one wants to be exact, the country can be divided into 13 different "Brazils." These diverse levels of development throughout Brazil allow our material to have a longer lifespan. It remains timely in the hinterland when it has gone out of date in Sao Paulo and Rio.

This is the source of our real pleasure and satisfaction. Needs surface, our enthusiasm grows as we see the possibility of helping resolve immediate HRD problems. It's highly gratifying to aid in changing the outlook of people who never have

a chance as we do to see their part of Brazil from a distance.

Yet, there are other reasons why we work in Brazil. We're not trying to affect an "international homogenization". Rather, our wish is to put this country where it deserves to be: among the leaders. It has everything to offer: natural resources, an intelligent population and a desire to win, but it needs more people who are interested in creating HRD models that will aid in its development.

When I consider what elements are needed for such evolutionary change to occur, the following story comes to mind:

Farmer Machado received a visit from his parish clergyman. Said the priest, "Why Farmer Machado, I'm amazed at this farm of yours. The soybean crop is fantastic and you're reaping beautiful fruits and vegetables, hardly a weed in sight. God has been very good to this land these past 20 years and given you great abundance."

Farmer Machado replied, "Well, preacher, I agree with you, but you should have seen what a mess this place was before God had Farmer Machado and his helpers to do the work!"

That summarizes Brazil's HRD picture; it has everything, but without the Farmer Marchados—HRD professionals—to carefully cultivate, it may lack needed direction.



Carole Faulman Martino is vice president of Siamar Treinamento e Desenvolvimento S/C Ltda. and Siamar Cultural Interamericano e Editora Ltda., in Sao Paulo, Brazil.