

SEPARATE TRAINING SESSIONS FOR WOMEN?

BY ALMA BARON

As she entered the meeting room, I could tell she was angry. I greeted her as I do all of the seminar students: "Good morning, I'm Alma Baron, the coordinator of this seminar." "Good morning," she replied, looking around the room. "All good little girls here, I suppose, following their bosses' orders?" "Well," I laughingly replied, "this is a women's seminar." She looked at me, took her name tag and found a seat at one of the participant tables.

As others arrived, I forgot my first impression of her in the rush of the greetings, directions and orientation. Participants then began introducing themselves. Most said it was their first training seminar. When asked, as was part of the introduction routine, what they expected to gain from the experience, many responded that they expected to be able to perform their management job better after the course. Two of the 35 members expressed the controlled anger I saw in the early arrival:

"I can't see why women have to be trained separately. Seems to me if we work with men we should be trained with them," was one comment.

The woman whom I mentioned when I opened this article was even more vocal in her criticism:

"Women are a pain," she said. (I admired her courage in saying this in front of 34 strangers.) *"I don't trust women and I frankly will say that I think these three days will be a waste of time. I have nothing to learn from other women. I'm on a fast track to the top, and this isn't going to help!"*

Silence greeted her outburst. I hastened to try and clear the air by saying, "Everyone's entitled to their opinion. How about giving yourself a chance to change your mind? I've found, with about seven years' experience of women's seminars behind me, that people who come in as you do with a negative attitude toward this type of continuing education often have a different opinion when it's over. We'll all try to prove you're wrong."

The incidents I described are all true. Over the years, about 10 per

cent of the attendants in a women's seminar have objected to the all-women designation. I have wrestled with the problem myself — the problem of women working with men and being trained separately.

In 1973, I wrote an article dealing with the problem. Today my ideas have not changed, only become reinforced. Please read the following letter:

"Dear Alma: I was concerned when I heard you say that in the future you would consider cutting back on women's extension courses. If I understood correctly, you felt there was a need for men and women to come together to study management skills. If I am wrong in this statement, please forgive me. That prospect did prompt me to write this letter so that I might attempt to tell you in part what the seminar did for me beyond the academic.

"The seminar took us far beyond the academic subject. It was a meeting place where women could share their problems and triumphs. A place where women could meet and learn from each other. I know

this is not news to you, but I want to remind you that we are many, and we are mere infants. I want what you and other women can teach me. Men have taught me all my life but they have taught me limitation. You and other women like you teach me there are no limits.

"Where else can I learn and be as free? Where can I communicate my business life so freely with other women? Where else would anyone be as interested in what I do and how I do it? When I meet with my professional peers they know I belong there because they have seen my credentials. We do not share with each other nor do we admit our ignorance. We come dressed as professional business women and do not forget our roles.

"Women need to share their successes without fear of competition or scorn. We benefit from sharing our successes by learning of opportunities open to women that we might have previously considered closed. Some of us are unsure of just how far we dare step out. We

can create dreams of attainment for each other. If I say to a man, 'I have a corporate car,' he lifts one eyebrow and thinks, 'the dumb broad, doesn't she know I've had one for 20 years?' If I say to another woman, 'I drive a company car,' she may think, 'if she can, maybe I can.' If I explain the financial benefits of a company car, she will see the dollar value as relates to her salary. She now has a financial goal and a dream of attainment. A dream to be made real? If a Catholic nun can write a Harlequin Romance, can I then possibly write a trade magazine article? A dream to be made real? Without the particular atmosphere of this seminar, I would never know of the dream, let alone dare to dream.

"Let me learn from you and my sisters in the classroom. Let me take away what I have learned to use in competing on my home ground. I don't want to compete in the classroom.

"Alma, I cannot adequately put into words all that I gained from

this seminar. All the presenters showed us such tremendous enthusiasm and courage. I hope you are able to take great pleasure in leading women in continuing growth. Thank you for this experience. Sincerely, Norma Blackwood, Chicago, Illinois."

Since 1973, the number of women taking seminars especially for women has more than doubled at Management Institute. Three new seminars have been added, and the number of times these seminars are held has been stepped up. In essence, hundreds of women are attending these courses. Each time a course is announced, the enrollment grows. Many people are placed on a waiting list for months in order to gain admission into a particular seminar. This, by itself, should indicate that women are responding to these seminars because they believe that they are valuable. I have at times doubted the so-called success of the sheer numbers of these seminars. Using the research that I finished myself, I sometimes assumed that managers were sending women to these seminars as a palliative for their training experiences. But the women returned for other seminars at their own insistence.

This is another plus for continuing the separate programs. But more than the fact that women get to interface with other women for the first time, as so poignantly expressed by Norma, is the fact that they learn from models. Modeling has been denied women in management. Oh no, it wasn't discrimination, it was simply the lack of women in management positions when younger women could observe and model. My cursory research (ongoing by constant questioning of my students) yields the interesting and logical data that women who have others as models, had the mother working in a traditional role. "Oh yes," they respond. "My mother always worked, but she was a teacher — a nurse — a storekeeper — a secretary." Not once have I had a participant tell me that her mother was in a management job, unless she owned the company, usually with the father.

MAGER'S DONE IT AGAIN!

So what, you say.

Well, if you **know** the Mager-Pipe CRI workshop course, you'll "really appreciate" the new Second Edition. It introduces two very useful new modules called Application Planning and Super-T. And it's smoother, includes more examples and job aids, and is easier to administer.

If you **don't** know the Mager-Pipe Criterion-Referenced Instruction (CRI) course, you'll want to find out why companies like Xerox, Air Canada and Gulf Oil train their trainers to apply CRI concepts to their own instruction. The benefits they enjoy may be available to your company, too.

For a brochure that tells the full story, write to: Mager Associates, Inc., 13245 Rhoda Drive, Los Altos Hills, CA 94022

MAGER Associates, Inc.

Circle No. 143 on Reader Service Card

"The young women in our culture who aspired to management positions have no chance to absorb behavior for their expectant role."

The modeling aspect of learning a new social routine has long been acknowledged among educators as one of the most potent learning experiences in existence. Each of us is socialized into our culture by observation and subconscious absorption of social routines we live with. We learn to eat properly, to dress properly, to address one another properly, to perform and do countless verbal and nonverbal courtesies by simply watching and copying those around us. When I use the word "properly," I refer to that which is acceptable in our culture that identifies who we are — boy and girl, young adolescent, young adult and so on.

Those of us who do not absorb these routines without conscious teaching become "special." Some of our "specials" are institutionalized because they are so deviant. The majority of us reform the social level into which we have

been born, and we continue to mature through formal education and experience. The young women in our culture who aspired to management positions have no chance to absorb behavior for their expectant role. They really cannot model their fathers (although many have tried) because to do so causes great ambiguity among the women; they are not men. They need a successful, feminine model and, until a very short time ago, few if any such models existed.

Training courses for women in management offer models. Not one of the women attending is the paragon of a successful woman manager. But among all of them attending a potpourri of experience, behavior patterns and communicative techniques are exposed. A woman attendee then can pick and choose from a variety of models and she often does. I have received countless letters saying

that the courses helped them to understand what a powerful support a group of women can be. I have received letters which indicate promotions reached and job enrichment realized simply because the women picked up on tips from other women. I have received testimonials for women from other women that cause men's camaraderie to pale in comparison. Women love the company of other women!

Is this surprising? I think not; I simply think it's a new phenomenon. Women have never had the company of other women before. Women related to other women as wives of a couple. Women didn't have women as close companions once they married. (Somehow marriage precluded close friendships between women.) Women didn't trust other women because they never had a chance to know other women in any great number. Now, as a network is forming, women are finding themselves in the minds and hearts and aspirations of the women they meet in ever larger numbers.

I responded to Norma and her beautiful letter: "Yes, I shall continue to plan safe and non-threatening sessions for women as long as they identify them as useful. I'm excited to see that a self-confident woman can work constructively with both sexes. I'm excited to see self-confidence grow in our emerging woman manager. Such confidence, in both men and women, can only brighten the work place and all of us look forward to that!"

Alma Baron is associate professor of Management, Management Institute, Department of Business and Management, University of Wisconsin - Extension, Madison. Presently, she coordinates, teaches and has initiated all the programs for the emerging woman manager. She also is the coordinator for the Executive and Administrative Programs for Secretaries, which lead to the Executive Secretarial Administrative Degree. She is a consultant to many major corporations throughout the United States, and has been guest lecturer abroad several times.

"Common Misconceptions About Behavior Modeling and Supervisory Skills Training (SST)"

May we send you a copy of this article by Dr. B. L. Rosenbaum which appeared in the T & D Journal?

MOHR

The Model for Behavior Modeling

Management of Human Resources Development
1700 Bedford Street
Stamford, CT 06905
203-357-1357

*New York/Stamford
Los Angeles*

Custom designed behavior modeling works because it meets identified needs of your company by developing models that capture your unique personality, while solving your problems, in your work environment, using your language.

Please attach your business card here.

- Contact me. I would like to arrange for a review of the Custom Designed Behavior Modeling process for
 - Supervisory Skills
 - Interviewing
 - Management Performance Planning
- Send more information and a list of upcoming dates and locations of workshops.
- Send reprint of "Common Misconceptions about Behavior Modeling and Supervisory Skills Training (SST)."

Circle No. 150 on Reader Service Card