

# ONE-TO-ONE TRAINING OF TOP MANAGEMENT

*how to transfer  
learning from classroom  
to work environment by  
one-to-one training*

One of the most serious difficulties in making rapid behavioral changes in the managerial personnel in underdeveloped countries is the result of what trainers call lack of "transfer of learning." Transfer of learning, although a complicated process of behavioral change, can be viewed as simply the carry over of a new behavior from the classroom to the actual job. During the training, the trainer attempts to alter the trainee's behavior in the belief that the new behavior will be subsequently utilized in the work situation. Unfortunately, the transfer of new learned behavior to the work environment is dependent upon a large number of factors which include among others, the trainer's ability, and the trainee's attitudes and abilities. In addition, the trainee's motivation to alter his own behavior is of crucial importance.

## TRANSFER SPACE LAW

There is one major reason why the behavioral changes observed in the training situation (usually a classroom) are not effectively transferred to the job. This can be called the problem of "transfer space." The law of transfer of learning holds that transfer increases the more the training situation approximates the work environment in which the learned behavior is to be ultimately used. The size of the "transfer space" can be viewed as being directly related to the similarity or difference between the learning and work situations.

This, on the surface, would not seem to present any serious training problems. However, under closer examination one

sees that most classroom environments are *very unlike* the work situation. As a result, a large part of the new behavior demonstrated in the learning situation *cannot* be expected to appear in the work situation. The explanation for this is that the trainee is unable to relate the classroom application of, say the organizational principle of "chain of command," to the situation in which he works. Intellectually he understands the principle but on the job he consistently violates it.

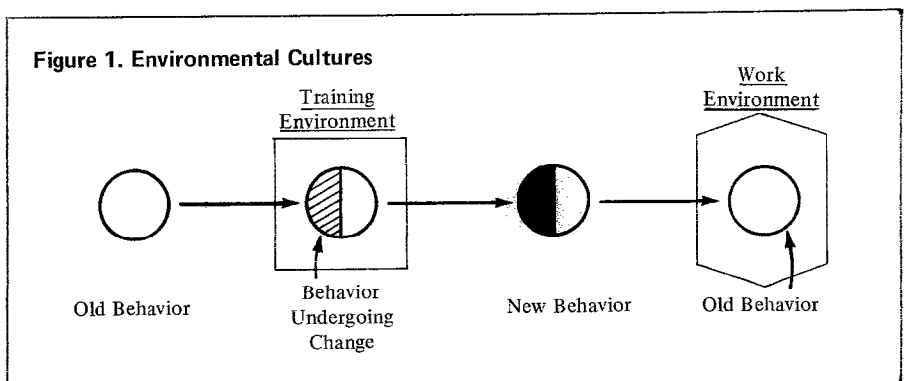
Why is this? Does this suggest that the trainee is insincere; that he demonstrates his understanding of the concept to please the trainer and then knowingly behaves in a different way when not observed?

What might be done? Could the classroom situation be made to more closely represent the work situation? Let's examine these questions.

Is the trainee insincere? Probably not. He and the trainer are having the same problem. They both are unable to accurately relate the first situation to the second. The trainer is unable to duplicate the work environment no matter how hard he tries and the trainee does not view the two as the same (for indeed they are not). Diagrammatically this might look like Figure 1.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CULTURES

The "shape" of situation B is considerably different than situation A and as such situation B does not elicit the new behavior. What makes it so difficult if not almost impossible to make the two



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situations alike? To begin with, the work situation is composed of not only the work environment but the entire cultural system of the society in which it is found. Under these conditions, the entire spectrum of cultural pressures and conditions operate freely and influence the trainee on a continuing basis.

In the training environment, however, the cultural system is somewhat filtered and as such operates at a reduced level. Moreover the training situation, if set up by a foreigner, may more closely represent *his* culture rather than the trainee's culture.

Here is an example: A manager is trained in the methods and techniques of CPM. As part of the training, the trainee receives considerable practice in developing CPM networks. Sample networks are prepared using information supplied by the trainer. In the trainer's country, automation makes data of this type readily available for this purpose. At the conclusion of the training the manager returns to his office and resumes his work.

As a follow up, the manager is asked to prepare a CPM diagram of one of his projects within a reasonable time limit. Although he tries, often to a point of utter frustration, he fails completely and is forced into making the embarrassing report that he has been unable to prepare the network. The trainer's initial reaction is shock. The trainee was able to prepare networks during the training. Why not now?

When the trainer examines the matter further, he finds that the manager simply did not know how to go about collecting the data on which the network is based. During the training the data was supplied to the trainee by the trainer but in the work environment the data had to be laboriously collected from several departments by the trainee himself. The departments having the information had reacted typically and consistently with the cultural norm. They had simply not supplied the data.

### ONE-TO-ONE AN ANSWER

One solution to the problem readily suggests itself. If we assume that classrooms, which by necessity are isolated from the work and cultural environments are of only limited value the trainer must relocate the training site to one which as nearly as possible approximates the work environment. The answer of course, is to train in the work environment itself. The type of training recommended takes place in the trainee's environment and attempts to combine the theoretical concepts of, say management, with practical applications to the work of the trainee as it arises. Gradually the trainee takes over more and more of the work and reduces the trainer's role to that of a part-time consultant. The point at which the trainee completely assumes independent responsibility depends of course upon his individual abilities. After a satisfactory shift has taken place the trainer follows up periodically to insure that the new behavior is fixed.

This method, however, presents some serious problems. To begin with, it limits the class size to *one* thus raising training costs. It alters the natural environment by including the trainer as a foreign object. The trainee's privacy is taken from him and the trainer tends to become involved with the on-going operations of the organization. These disadvantages are, in the writer's opinion outweighed by large increase in the new behavior incorporated in the job. The "transfer space" which was earlier defined as the differences between the training situation and the environment in which the training is to be applied, is reduced to a minimum.

### PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

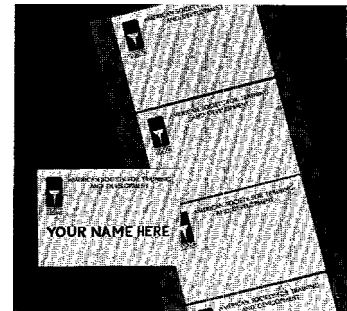
Obviously, training as costly as this cannot be applied to large numbers of managers. It should be reserved for the top five to eight managers of an organization and should be initiated at the top of organization, and then gradually continued downward.

Some major advantages accrue from this

training technique. Among these are (1) the continuation of productive work during the training period, (2) the spillover training effect resulting from the interaction of the senior-most executive with the other managers (who subsequently will also be trained) and (3) it permits the trainee to progress at his own rate. In addition, training the senior managers tends to develop a management style for the organization. In effect, the lower levels of the organization are "trained" through the interaction with the top of the organization.

In conclusion, the transfer space can be effectively reduced by one-to-one training in the work environment. Training of this type must be limited to the highest levels of management and should be used as an adjunct to the more conventional participative group training.

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