

Sub - Contracting The Training Function

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Training directors are familiar enough with the processes of production to know that, if you sub-contract out parts of that process, you have lost a measure of control. You can turn thumbs up or thumbs down on the part that arrives from the sub-contractor, but you can't very well dictate how he should run his shop.

Of late, training directors have been sub-contracting parts of the training function to universities and other educational institutions. This has been generally in the fields of management training, industrial relations training, and some supervisor training.

Whether the outside institutions are doing the job better or poorer is not for this writer to say. I do say that the training director must be more astute than ever before in that important function of his—evaluation of training.

For the suspicion is strong that the universities are much better at selling enrollments than they are at delivering

the goods, i.e., at instructing. Recently, I asked five young people taking evening courses respectively in public administration, banking, education, safety and industrial management whether the courses were worth the sacrifice in time and money. In all cases, the answer was that too frequently, course content was repetitious, attenuated and an elaboration of the obvious. In short, boring. Why did they put up with it then? Because they were earning a degree needed for a career, or were meeting requirements toward a state certificate, or were meriting a pay raise for courses completed.

Admittedly, five people is a very small sampling of opinion, and a subjective one at that. So let's look further.

Here is Dr. George B. Cutten, president emeritus of Colgate University writing in *School and Society*—"A large number of persons on the faculties of our colleges lack teaching ability and have no interest in the teaching func-

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tion. Indeed, with the possible exception of the Sunday School, probably the poorest contemporary teaching is that to be found in our colleges."

Dr. Harold Taylor, President of Sarah Lawrence College, has called much of the teaching at the university level boring in an article in the *New York World Telegram and Sun*.

Professor George Williams, in a book entitled — SOME OF MY BEST FRIENDS ARE PROFESSORS, calls the typical professor "a harmless drudge" who never learns anything new or forgets anything old. If his instruction is of low quality, the professor seldom acknowledges that he may be at fault; it is always the *student* who causes the student to fail.

It might be appropriate to ask, "What seem to be the criteria that universities are using in the selection and promotion of professors?" A survey made by two sociologists, Theodore Caplow of the University of Minnesota and Reece McGee of the University of Texas in their book *THE ACADEMIC MARKETPLACE* (Basic Books, New York) is most revealing. The authors conducted this survey among 371 college professors and administrators, asking what is the test of a college teacher's ability. Here are the illuminating answers:

- 4% believe the test is—The way he teaches
- 33% believe the test is—The number of specialized papers he publishes in scholarly journals.
- 63% wrote answers so confusingly worded that it is impossible to state what criteria they believe in to judge a teacher's ability.

In short, it would seem that promotions to full professorships are based, not on teaching ability, but on research and the ability to get your papers published. And the fact that 63% of those surveyed wrote answers in gobbledygook is by inference a heavy indictment of their teaching ability.

Of course, there is some good to excellent teaching going on in the universities. But training directors are going to have to identify this teaching through the evaluating process.

One form of evaluation is the questionnaire completed by the trainee at the conclusion of the course. Figure I shows an evaluation sheet being used by one organization.

No doubt this questionnaire can be improved upon. But in it are most of the basic principles of good instruction. A training director, in the process of developing a new instructor in his own shop, would insist on the application of these principles. Why then not insist on them when the Company is paying good money to have the instructional job done on the outside?

The sheets will give a subjective viewpoint, but the consensus should be reasonably valid. To have a constructive effect, they would have to be made available (minus students' names) to the college teacher as well as his immediate superior. Carrying the evaluation a step further, the training director then needs to determine whether the outside training has resulted in beneficial effects on the job.

For the big pay-off is in *results*. The training director doesn't care about semester hours credit, or state certification,

or whether the professor has a national reputation. The training director simply wants effective teaching that is benefit- ing the Company. If the universities won't supply it, he has no choice but to supply it himself.

FIGURE I
EVALUATION OF COURSE FOR WHICH TUITION
IS PAID BY THE COMPANY

Note: The purpose of this evaluation sheet is to assure that we do not continue to sponsor tuition courses which do not provide a reasonable return on the Company's investment.

.....
Course Instructor
.....
Institution Date Student

Based on the Company's and your needs,

1. Was the level of the course —
Too elementary?..... Too advanced?..... About right?.....
2. Was the course content or subject matter —
Too crowded?..... Too thin and drawn out?.....
About right?.....
3. Was the course content well organized and were you given an outline so that you knew where you were at all times?
Excellent organization..... Good..... Fair..... Poor.....
4. Did the instructor motivate the whole course and each major element?
Excellent job..... Good..... Fair..... No motivation.....
5. What percentage of the course was learning by *doing* on your part?
What was the nature of this doing?
.....
6. Was the use of visual aids —
Excellent?..... Good?..... Fair?..... Non-existent?.....
What was the nature of the visual aids used?
.....
7. Was practical example and actual experience cited to highlight theory?
Excellent..... Good..... Fair..... Poor.....
8. Did the instructor get pertinent discussion going rather than engage in a monologue?
Excellent..... Good..... Fair..... No discussion.....
9. Did the instructor talk in simple language rather than in gobbledygook?
Excellent..... Good..... Fair..... Gobbledygook.....
10. Was the course related to your duties in the Company?
Closely..... Moderately..... Little..... Not at all.....
11. How was it related?
.....
.....
.....
12. Would you recommend continued utilization of this course by the Company?
Yes..... No.....
13. Give a short summary statement of your general impression of the course.
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