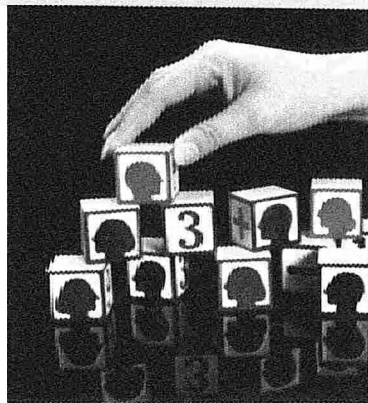


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ISSUES

Systems Approaches Not Enough for Health Pros

George Kimmerling's article, "Warning: Workers at Risk, Train Effectively" (*April Journal*), primarily looked at the issue of training for health protection from a systems approach. But even with such a structured approach, good health risk communications probably will not happen, because health and safety professionals have personality profiles unlike corporate managers. Typical train-the-trainer or instructional delivery courses are not compatible.

No amount of external systems approaches to training effectiveness will, by themselves, help health professionals communicate better. First, they must understand their own communications biases.

*W. Larry Pecovic and Ray Johnson
Advanced Communication Techniques
Columbia, Md.*

Technology No Threat

I was disturbed by your April article, "The Dwindling Future of Work in America," because the authors' bias disagrees with much of what I read, observe and experience.

Careers and jobs are not disappearing; they are changing. Research and projections based on traditional definitions and expectations often are dismal, though hardly realistic. To be realistic, research should rely less upon large organizations that, because inefficiency often comes with size, will be threatened in the marketplace, and more on careers built in independent ventures and small, service-based companies. These jobs admittedly are harder to track, but they are becoming an important element in the job market.

Baby boomers who perceive a job as work done to achieve results can thrive in this environment. Those who think of a job as a position in a large company and of career growth as the oc-

cupation of a series of other positions will have problems in coping with the changing nature of work in America.

The threat of technology is a perfect example. Technology is reducing the numbers of people performing routine and repetitive tasks at all levels. It is also generating significant numbers of jobs in non-repetitive fields such as business analysis, marketing, strategic planning and communications—not to mention systems.

Many projections of tough times in the job market are based on economic issues such as the foreign trade balance and the federal deficit. In 1973, the damning issue was the energy crisis. In 1947, it was post-war adjustment. In 1931, it was the insecurity of financial institutions. In 1896, it was the dangers of the gold standard. Yet, despite every economic indicator of doom back to the time of Aristotle, the quality of life has continued to improve.

In 1883, a concerned city planner projected that by 1983 the streets of New York City would be impassable because of all the horse manure. His projections did not allow for the possibility that others would recognize the problem and come up with new ideas to address it. More importantly, he failed to predict the dominance of the automobile. The authors of the article might have fallen into the same trap.

I do not mean to say that the problems the authors present are not real. They are quite real, especially when they are discussed in terms such as "worker obsolescence." But their perceptions and projections are neither universal nor inevitable.

Instead of documenting their distress, I am encouraging them to see the causes of it, to adjust their perceptions of their futures to take in a broader and, I think, more realistic view, and to grow from there. Had I not seen positive results from this work, the article would not have angered me to the point of writing to you.

Thank you for providing a forum for such ideas.

*Michael Ponder
Floral Park, N.Y.*

