

Training in Leadership

Job Related Training for Dutch Steel Mill Supervisors

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The Dutch Steel Mills have developed a training method in leadership which may be of interest to training people in general.

The method has been developed at the request of the Steel Mills Harbor Manager. He had noticed that the performance of foremen and first-line supervisors who had attended "classical" courses on basics of supervision did not improve noticeably. He asked for a course with more emphasis on practical exercises in a situation related to actual work.

Type of Leader Required

Work situations in harbors are constantly changing. For instance, ships differ in:

1. Construction of loading/unloading facilities
2. Captains and crews

In addition to job knowledge, supervisors need the following qualities:

1. Tact and communication skill
2. Ingenuity and improvisation
3. Planning skill

Development of Method

First, the design of practical on-the-job exercises was considered. From the safety point of view this was unattractive and also work in the harbors would be disturbed too much. Moreover, the relationship of the course members with prospective subordinates might suffer because of mistakes of the former.

A visit to a Dutch Army Officers Selection Center resulted in adapting Officer selection exercises to exercises aimed at developing supervisor skills.

A few trials were held with the modified exercises. It appeared that

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the phenomena which occurred were sufficiently analogous to those encountered in the harbors to warrant further development of the exercises and to build a course around them.

Before the first official course could be run, a lot of experimenting had to be done in the field of efficiency, safety, time needed, degrees of difficulty, sequence of exercises in connection with desired learning effects, etc. The present program is the result of six years of running courses and experimenting.

Program

The program as it is now consists of two main parts:

1. 35 hours of classroom work, which may be spread over three months. Apart from subjects in job knowledge, organization and general information, special attention is paid to preparation of assignments to be carried out in the "outdoor" week. This preparation is in such subjects as:
 - discussion leading
 - how to present your case
 - instruction technique
 - observation of your group work
 - work methods improvement
2. The second part of the course is residential and is given in a hotel. The hotel swimming-pool is where most of the exercises take place.

Details

1. The preparations of the assignments to be carried out in the outdoor week are used as subjects for discussion-leading exercises.

The approach is as follows:

- a. For each assignment the course leader appoints a discussion leader and an observer to assist in the evaluation of the discussion.
- b. The necessary data are to be

collected by the group.

- c. The discussion leader is to approach the problem systematically and alternative solutions must be prepared.
- d. A choice is then made by the group out of the possible solutions.
- e. A relevant aspect is that the discussion leader of the first week will be also responsible for the execution of the selected solution in the second week. His success or failure as a formal leader is at stake.
- f. For the selected solution, an action plan is made which includes
 - general strategy
 - allocation of tasks
 - organization
 - time needed per phase
- g. This action plan is to be reported back to the course leader. The objective is twofold:
 - exercise in reporting
 - check on safety aspects
 Finally this whole procedure is evaluated by the course leader with help of the observers and the course leader summarizes the facets with the greatest learning value.
2. At the start of the outdoor week, participants get a questionnaire to give the course leader their opinions and attitudes regarding phenomena such as:

- leadership
- factors affecting co-operation
- responsibility and delegation

In the middle and end of the week, this questionnaire is repeated to get an impression of changes taking place. Noticeable changes in attitude are reported to and discussed with course participants.

A day's program is as follows:

7:30 Breakfast

- 8:00- 8:30 Preparation of assignments
 8:30-12:30 Execution assignments plus short evaluation
 13:30-17:30 Execution assignments plus short evaluation

In the evening the most important features of the day are discussed on an informal basis.

Decisions made and their consequences are considered and also theoretical background is given.

Films are shown as recreation and to broaden outlook. Under the title "Countries and People," various documentary films are shown about norms and customs of countries in the limelight.

Sometimes management participates in the evaluation sessions, especially to show the analogy between incidents observed during the exercises and situations occurring at work. This may form the basis for a discussion between management and course participants about various problems occurring on the job.

At the same time management gets a feedback of its policy, from a level where this is normally rare.

Character of Assignments

Distinction is made between pure construction assignments and those where also ingenuity and improvisation are required.

1. *Construction Assignments.* With the construction assignments, the leader, with his group, are to construct heavy wooden structures and place them in shallow water. In general, these assignments are comparatively easier than the ingenuity assignments.

Relevant facets are:

- Because the participants construct the equipment with which they themselves are going to work during the rest of the week, they obtain a good

knowledge of the material.

- Control of both quality and quantity is important because the structures have been designed in such a way that control, before they can be used in an exercise, is a must. Especially this "conditioning of behavior," as far as control is concerned, appears to have a noticeable positive effect in the job later on.
- Another element is: organization of people and material at the work place.
 - allocation of tasks
 - work preparation
 - work planning
- An example of a construction assignment:

Construct two wooden "chairs" within 75 minutes. These chairs are 1.50 m high, broad and deep, they weigh 250 kg. Each component part fits only at one place: specific types of nuts and bolts are needed which are available, but mixed with other types. Selection and transport of material are parts of the exercises.

2. *Ingenuity Assignments.* In these assignments, for instance, a transport is to be carried out by a group via an apparently impassable way above shallow water. The action plan they have prepared in an earlier stage is their only guidance.

As in "real life," disturbances are introduced such as: a man falls ill, material is suddenly either not available or not of the right type, etc.

The emphasis with these assignments lies on close co-operation between group members. The leader must try to identify the capacities of each group member and make the best use of them in various stages of the exercise.

Emphasis is laid on:

- listening to each other
- not getting emotionally involved in the problem
- sensitivity towards each other's feelings
- taking the right decision at the right moment.

The importance of these faculties emerges in such an illustrative way that one can identify the need for them in the work situation quite easily.

The most important aspect of these exercises is probably that course members experience the relationship between supervisor and subordinate behavior. They also observe what impact certain differences in behavior can have on a process and they learn how to control them.

A careless approach, lack of safety control, lack of co-ordination, bad planning, etc. may be punished straight away by one or more group members taking a header. The responsible leader can be confronted in a realistic way with the consequences of his actions and decisions. Also group members who bodily experience the consequences of a selected working method come to realize the results of a passive attitude towards an authoritarian leader.

The course leader relates these experiences in his evaluation as much as possible to work situations.

The degree of difficulty of the various exercises increases in the course of the week. The possibilities and capacities in the various groups differ and the level of the assignments must be in line with capacity which is a bit above the group average. Therefore, assignments vary per group and no two courses are the same.

Results of the Training Method

In the past six years about 50 groups of foremen and first-line supervisors of various departments participated

in these courses. After it appeared that the method had a noticeable success with harbor staff, requests came from other departments as well. Already various groups from rail transport and maintenance departments have participated.

Much is still to be done to evaluate long-term effects of the method. However, investigations carried out up to now give the following indications:

1. The strong feedback of their behavior in a group gives the participants a training in self-knowledge and self-control. Their sensitivity towards others sometimes increases and their prejudice against people or situations diminishes.
2. The method may improve the confidence of participants in oneself and others.
3. The participants experience that leadership is not an absolute phenomenon. It has functional aspects and may also be geographically determined. There are certain areas in the plant or harbor where their leadership is more effective than at other places.
4. The participants are sometimes better able to distinguish critical factors of a problem. Their problem-solving capacity has often improved and they have learned to make use as much as possible of the knowledge and experience of their subordinates.

Summary of Interesting Features

1. Line management spotted a training need which they were able to put in the form of a specific request to training department. The subjects to be covered were indicated and emphasis was laid on the need for practical exercises which course members could easily identify with the work situation.
2. Modification of exercises to iden-

- tify certain skills and attitudes into exercises to teach the same.
3. The less people are accustomed to abstract thinking, the less they think in terms of analogies, the more there is a need to use simulation techniques which resemble the work.
 4. Integration of most of the facets of the work of a first-line supervisor in one exercise. Compare:
 - collecting and analyzing information
 - decision making
 - work planning
 - allocation of tasks
 - on-the-job training
 - on-the-job communication
 - reporting
 5. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the course was carried out some time after the course by interviewing supervisors of participants. The only yardstick used was on the job performance.

Graflex to Train in Mississippi

Graflex, Inc., a subsidiary of General Precision Equipment Corporation, has received a two-year contract from the Delta Resource Development Corporation to operate a rehabilitation and training center at Greenville, Mississippi, according to Robert L. Rice, Graflex president. Expenditures under this contract could amount to \$10 million.

Operation of the center, which will be located at the recently closed Greenville Air Force Base, is part of a Mississippi Delta Regional Economic Development program initiated by the Mississippi Research and Development Center and the Mississippi Vocational Rehabilitation Administration at the request of the city of Greenville.

Graflex, Inc., will work with the Delta Resource Development Corporation to meet the needs of the Mississippi Delta to train and rehabilitate an unusually large segment of its population, and in the industrial develop-

ment of the area. The Delta Resource Development Corporation is a non-profit organization chartered last year in Mississippi to develop the rehabilitation center at Greenville.

As the result of extensive evaluations, individuals needing work will be trained in skill areas in which they show aptitude and interest and which are now in demand in the region or which are expected to be in demand as a result of the related job development program.

The multi-faceted education and training program will center around on-the-job training in actual "pilot" manufacturing plants.

The industrial development program is designed to provide a ready labor pool, the availability of which would encourage established local companies to expand and diversify and would bring new companies and jobs to the area in manufacturing, service, retail and wholesale trade and tourism.

