

Combatting

Training is not the only weapon in an organization's fight against drug and alcohol abuse at work, but without it a company cannot successfully wage the war.

Many organizations are implementing hard-nosed policies, such as tougher penalties and mandatory testing (urinalysis, etc.). But dealing with substance abuse use isn't solely a policy and testing issue, as the research in this article suggests. It involves values, motivation, stress, communication, change, and conflict management—all basic management skills. I have found that the companies that have avoided or decreased drug use at work have done so through training their supervisory and management personnel, creating employee assistance programs, and concentrating on both substance abuse and management issues.

My conclusions are based on recent research conducted by Human Resources Research, a division of my company. This project was the first to look specifically at the actions, policies, and responses of organizations concerning training issues and substance abuse. The results follow.

The respondents

In February 1988 we mailed surveys to 500 training professionals randomly selected from a special interest group of management trainers. In the cover

letter, we asked the recipient to forward the survey to the most appropriate person.

We received 60 usable surveys—a 12 percent response rate, which compares very favorably to other surveys on substance abuse. Nearly 60 percent of the respondents were from companies with 500 to 5000 employees on the payroll; the rest were divided fairly evenly above and below those limits. A fifth of them were from the health-care industry, 17 percent from financial, 10 percent from retailing, and 8 percent from manufacturing; the rest represented a wide range

of industries, from insurance and construction to transportation and entertainment.

Key findings

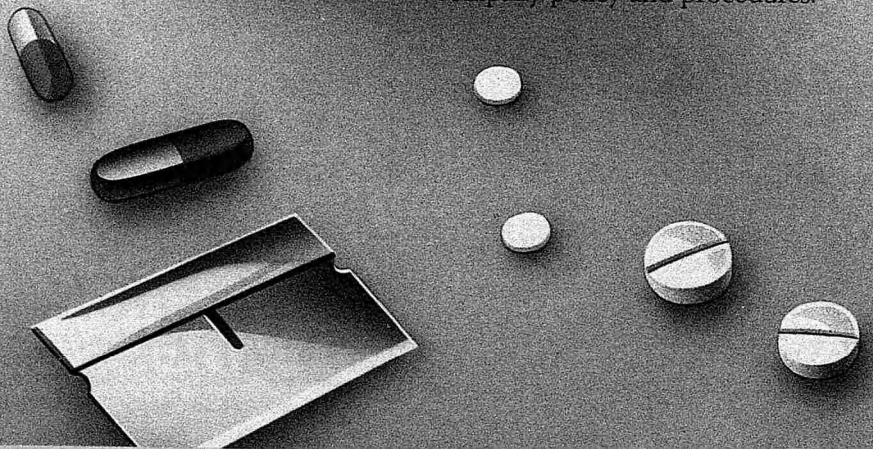
Sixty-five percent of the responding organizations have formal employee assistance programs. Only 26.7 percent provide training concerning the abuse of alcohol or other substances. Most of that training focuses on policy and procedures; only some of it focuses on confronting, counseling, and legal issues.

Training programs on substance abuse are not integrated well with other management training efforts. Likewise, examples of substance abuse problems are uncommon in regular management training activities. Program information sometimes is shared or coordinated.

The most frequently used techniques for substance abuse training are the traditional ones: lecture and case studies. The least-used techniques are those that involve participants: experiential exercises, simulations, self-assessment, and self-study materials.

Attitudes toward an issue as complicated as substance abuse and training are difficult to measure. But survey respondents clearly believe that training can have a greater impact in combatting the problem than policy, rules, or testing. They also believe that the substance abuse issue is closely related to basic management effectiveness. They believe they should increase their training efforts in the area of prevention and decrease them in the area of company policy and procedures.

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Drugs at Work

By James W. Schreier

Organizations with more than 500 employees are more likely to conduct training on substance abuse issues than smaller companies. Organizations with more than 5,000 employees are even more likely to conduct training.

Not a new problem

While the problem of drugs and alcohol in organizations is not new, the last two years have seen an increase in concern. Publicized incidents of on-the-job substance abuse (such as the Amtrak wreck a couple of years ago, where the engineer was found to have been smoking marijuana), new surveys, and the rising interest in drug testing have sparked increased attention.

Training magazine's 1987 survey of the training industry included for the first time questions about substance abuse. Responses to the six questions were as follows:

- 24.8 percent drug test employees with probable cause;
- 8.5 percent drug test employees without probable cause;
- 14.2 percent drug test job applicants;
- 67.1 percent have a formal policy on substance abuse;
- 37.9 percent have an employee assistance program;
- 25.4 percent conduct or sponsor training for substance abusers.

While the results in this article are from my company's most recent survey, it was our fourth national survey on substance abuse, and our research showed a continued increase in on-

the-job substance abuse incidents and in concerns about specific substances, testing, and policy issues.

For example, 95 percent of organizations have had direct experience with employee substance abuse on the job, and 98 percent of respondents feel that the alcohol and drug abuse problem within their organizations is the same or more serious than it was five years ago.

The research also concluded that while President Reagan's "war on drugs" directly targeted the workplace, only 10 percent of the survey respondents feel that this movement has better than a 50 percent chance of succeeding. Furthermore, although there is some movement toward tougher penalties, stricter policies, and an increased emphasis on testing, survey respondents still rank *education* as the alternative with the most potential for eliminating drugs in the workplace.

A majority of respondents feel that cocaine is different from other drugs in the workplace, and 24 percent of the organizations have changed their policies because of it; 44 percent increased training.

In each of our four studies, respondents have cited poor job performance as the number-one motivating factor for developing policies concerning

substance abuse and testing. Absenteeism and the rise in cases among employees have had the next largest impact in the most recent study.

Now let's look at some of the more specific findings of our most recent survey.

What activities are provided?

The first questions in the survey asked respondents to identify their program activities. This includes employee assistance programs (EAPs), wellness or health programs, and whether or not they provided training related to employee use of alcohol or other substances. While a majority of organizations have EAPs (65 percent), significantly fewer (33.3 percent) have wellness or broader health programs. And only 26.7 percent provide training related to substance abuse.

Organizations with more than 500 employees are more likely to have EAPs than those with fewer than 500 employees. Wellness and health programs are more common in organizations with more than 5,000 employees. Training related to substance abuse is nonexistent in organizations with fewer than 500 employees; it is more common in organizations with more than 5,000 employees.

The healthcare, transportation, and utility industries are most likely to conduct training related to substance abuse; financial organizations are the least likely to conduct this kind of training.

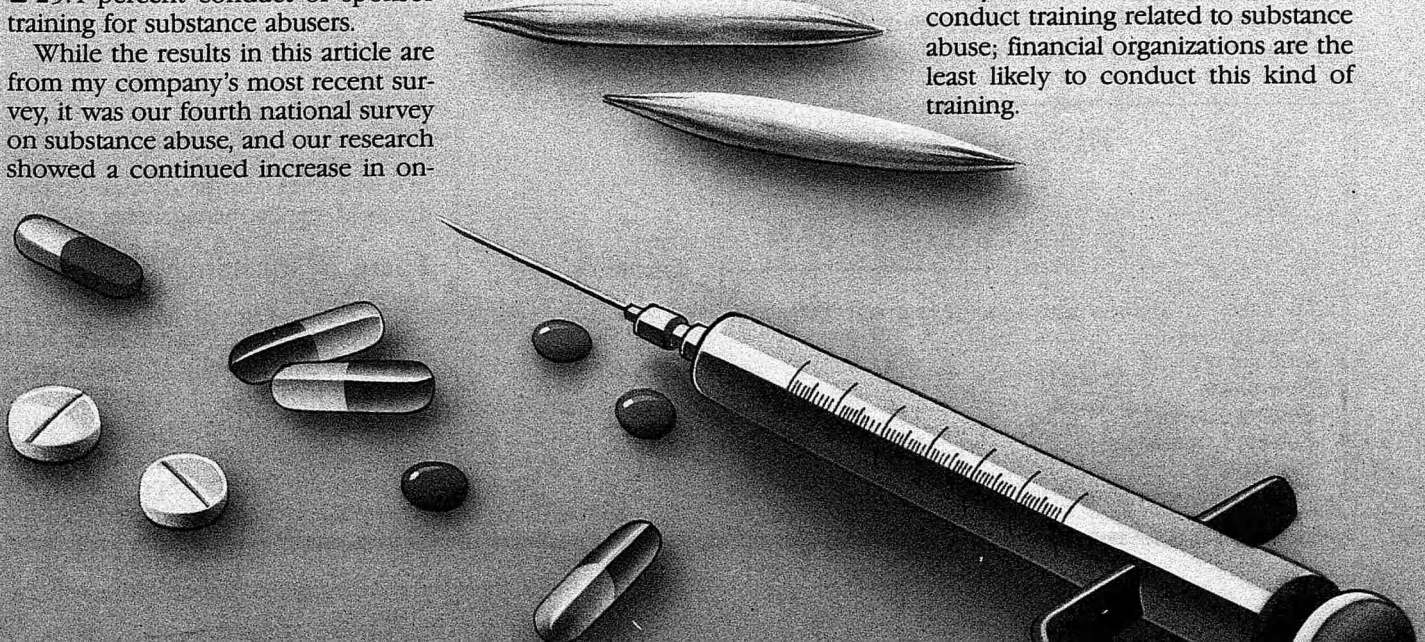


Figure 1—Types of substance abuse training and who receives it

| | Facts | Policy/ Procedures | Identifying Users | Confronting/ Counseling | Legal Issues |
|-----------------|-------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Employees | 76.5 | 100.0 | 35.3 | 35.3 | 23.5 |
| Families | 41.2 | 11.8 | 17.6 | 23.5 | 5.9 |
| Supervisors | 76.5 | 94.1 | 76.5 | 64.7 | 58.8 |
| Middle managers | 70.6 | 94.1 | 70.6 | 64.7 | 58.8 |
| Professionals | 58.8 | 76.5 | 52.9 | 52.9 | 52.9 |
| Executives | 76.5 | 94.1 | 52.9 | 58.8 | 70.6 |

Survey respondents who do not conduct training related to substance abuse answered questions concerning attitudes about the role training might play. Respondents who do provide training related to substance abuse answered several additional questions concerning the specific types of training they conduct, how they integrate substance abuse training with other management training, and what training techniques and materials they use.

What kind of training?

For organizations that conduct training in substance abuse, we provided a matrix of sample target audiences and specific topics. We asked respondents to identify the topics covered for six groups of people: employees, families, supervisors, middle managers, professionals, and executives. Figure 1 shows the responses to these questions.

All of these respondents currently conduct training on organization policy and procedures; just over three-quarters of them offer training on facts about alcohol and other substances. The remaining topics—identifying users, confronting and counseling, and

legal issues—receive less attention. But there are some important differences in topics for different audiences.

The number of organizations conducting training on confronting and counseling skills and legal issues is higher than we expected. And we were

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surprised at some organizations' emphasis on identifying users. If they train supervisors and middle managers in spotting users by identifying performance problems, that seems fine. But organizations whose training programs teach supervisors and middle managers to look for actual drug use seem to be going overboard.

Integration with other management training

A key issue for substance abuse training is the relationship to other organizational training efforts. Some organizations have created employee educational programs on alcohol and other substances as part of EAPs or wellness efforts. Some have made them part of industrial health or safety efforts. Still others have conducted them through training and development departments.

How a program is structured raises questions about its possible impact. If substance abuse programs for supervisors and managers are to be effective, the organization must recognize the need for basic management skills.

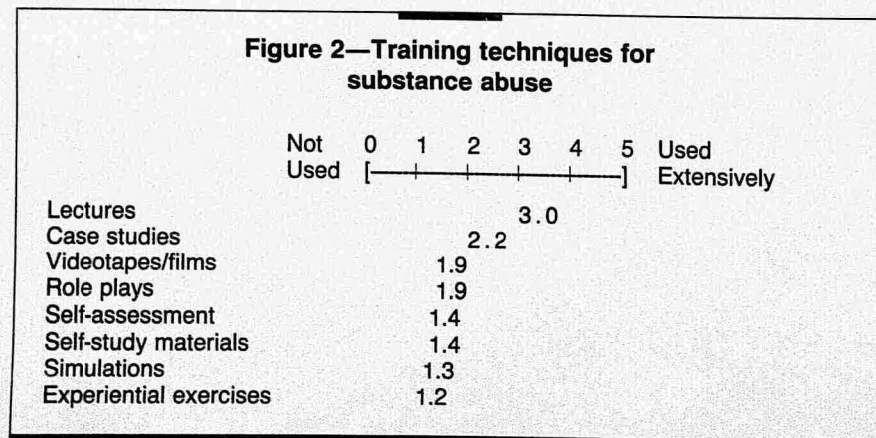
Our questionnaire collected information showing the degree of coordination and integration of the substance abuse training efforts with other management training. The results showed, as anticipated, that coordination is not very extensive.

The organizations providing substance abuse training also provide regular management training opportunities for their management and professional employees. But the integration and sharing of information are relatively minimal. There are also few examples of substance abuse programs in regular management training.

Focus of substance abuse training

Our survey asked respondents what the focus of their programs was versus what they thought it should be. This was related to the earlier question about program content for different audiences in Figure 1. Specifically, the survey asked what role training should have concerning substance abuse.

Figure 2—Training techniques for substance abuse



Most respondents (47.1 percent) identified company policy and procedure as the number-one role of current training efforts, followed by education and information (33.8 percent) and prevention (19.1 percent). But 33.5 percent identified education and information as the number-one role that the training should take. Prevention was second on their list (31.2 percent) and a company policy and procedure ran third (29.4 percent).

Training techniques and methods

Although we anticipated that only a small number of organizations would be conducting substance abuse training, we asked about specific training techniques they were using.

Little is known about the most useful training techniques, and though many people are concerned about the issue, programs often are not conducted effectively

We did this to help program developers spot opportunities for creating new materials. In many ways, training about substance abuse is a new area for companies and for trainers. Little is

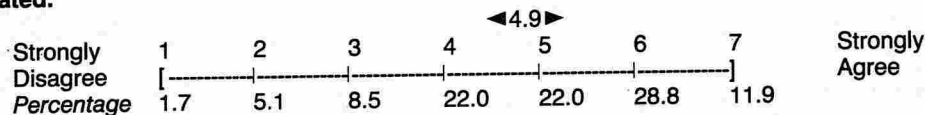
known about the most useful training techniques, and though many people are concerned about the issue, programs often are not conducted effectively. Most organizations, our survey showed, use lecture and case studies, while few use simulations, experiential exercises, self-study materials, and role plays (see Figure 2). Incidentally, over half the responding organizations that conduct substance abuse training either developed their own materials or did not identify the specific packaged programs they used.

Attitudes toward substance abuse training

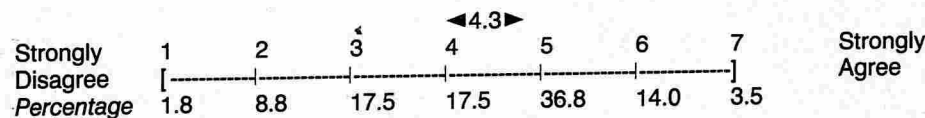
Are education and training going to be the crucial factors in the war against

Figure 3—Attitudes toward substance abuse training

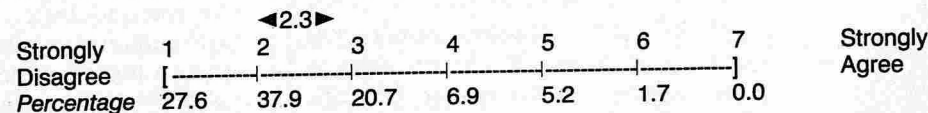
Substance abuse training makes a valuable contribution to effective management, and this contribution can be clearly demonstrated.



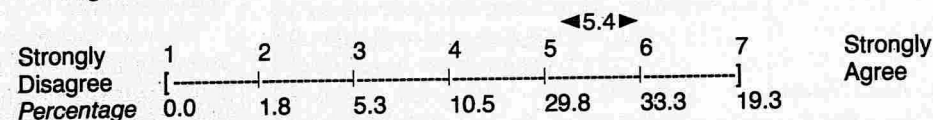
Substance abuse training could really put some people right, but of those who could benefit most do not risk taking part.



Substance abuse training has little contribution to make to management. The real impact is through policy, rules, and testing.



Substance abuse training is not about methods; it is about changing and learning to cope with change.



substance abuse? Is substance abuse training a poor substitute for tougher policies and testing programs? Or is substance abuse training really dealing with issues of employee development and change?

These are tough questions for anyone—training professional or not—to answer. Differences of opinion are obvious in the distribution of responses. The majority of respondents feel that ■ substance abuse training *can* make

a valuable contribution to effective management;

- very often the people who need training aren't taking part;
- training is the preferred solution to policy, rules, and testing;
- substance abuse training is not about methods, but rather about changing and learning to cope with change.

In Figure 3, it is important first to note the trends, clearly shown by the

key attitudes expressed above. It is equally important to note the range of responses to all items. Part of the reason is the changing nature of the problem—there have been increases in cases of employee substance abuse and constantly changing substances of popularity. But the fact remains that substance abuse and training are issues that will develop as attitudes, training techniques, and materials change.

Recommendations

As a result of our study, we generated a report that made several recommendations concerning the increased need for training in the area of substance abuse policy and management practices.

While the topic of training and substance abuse has received very little attention, organizations must develop creative strategies for preventing substance abuse in the workforce. This means new policies for intervention and treatment, new training programs, new programs for employee productivity and morale, and new programs for job and individual enrichment. Organizations must consider an integrated approach that includes management style, organization culture, and employee assistance efforts.

Greater emphasis must be given to education. The substance abuse problem in organizations will be solved by increased educational efforts, better management techniques, and improved treatment models.

Organizations also must recognize the importance of training in the area of substance abuse programming. This training must go beyond efforts to teach the facts of substance abuse and the procedures of testing and employee assistance referrals. Rather, training must include the critical links between all areas of management responsibility and substance abuse. This means that issues related to substance abuse must be integrated into training programs on management skills, supervisory development, leadership and motivation, communication skills, interviewing and performance appraisal, stress management, and executive development.

Only an integrated approach to eliminating substance abuse that involves organization culture, management practices, and employee assistance programming will effectively combat substance abuse in the workplace. ■

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