

HRD CONTROVERSY: ALA BLAKE AND MOUTON

INTRODUCTION — In our May 1980 issue, we featured Bob Blake and Jane Mouton of Scientific Methods, Inc. focusing on 11 significant issues they felt training and development professionals should gear themselves to solve. The pair pointed out, "These issues are controversial in nature by virtue of the fact that training and development professionals sometimes resolve these issues in ways that create more problems than they solve!"

The Journal felt that these issues needed to be exposed and/or debated at greater length. Thus, beginning with this issue and running through 10 subsequent issues, we will provide just that! In each issue, we will repeat Blake and Mouton's original formulation and present an author's reflection on that issue. . . .

— Editor

Training department training and intervention versus line-centered training and intervention.

As long as trainers retain the full re-

sponsibility for training, and as long as internal consultants retain the responsibility for intervening, trainers and internal consultants have the possibility

seeks to build effectiveness into its operations. This, of course, is a mammoth issue. If the training and development professional is expected to turn in a



**Robert
Blake**

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**Jane
Mouton**

report on what he or she has done, not much credit may be given for having talked to someone about how to intervene rather than having conducted a team-building session under his or her own reporting responsibility. If this is the case, the problem is to shift the concept of who is reporting what to whom, rather than to buckle under a faulty reporting system, one that makes a person do train-

ing and development work which is adverse to progress.

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of heightening their skills and weakening the skills of the line organization to act in self-initiating ways. The better the trainer, the more dependent the line. The better the internal consultant, the more dependent the client. The opposite formulation here is that the trainer should be teaching the line how to intervene, not intervening; he or she should be teaching the line how to do team building, not catalyzing a team as it

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ARE YOU WILLING TO TAKE THE RISK?

BY TOM GOAD

Bernadette Huffnagle has arrived. Her assertiveness training, hard work, and ability have paid off. She has been made director of human resources development for the Widgets R Us Manufacturing Co. Instead of going out to celebrate, she stays home on the first evening in her new job, plopped in the middle of the living room floor, rewriting the policy manual for her new department. The opening paragraph, stated in her enthusiastic, upbeat style, reads: "The mission of the WRUMC HRD department is to provide the most effective, efficient training programs possible, on time and within budget, and do so in the most professional manner."

Sounds terrific. Except for one small problem — she doesn't understand what her job really should be. Actually, Ms. Huffnagle realized this (after a good night's rest) and rewrote the mission the next morning. Her new version is: "The mission of the WRUMC HRD department is to constantly strive to work itself out of a job."

This is much better, because to do anything less is not only unrealistic, but falls short of the most professional approach to human resources development.

Who Has Ultimate Responsibility?

Training departments have traditionally been expected to function within the realm of the training cycle — analyze, design, de-

velop, implement, follow-up, and start all over again, becoming heavily involved at one or more points along the way. Organization development consultants have traditionally been called upon to solve organizational problems, also becoming heavily involved in the process. But reminisce for a moment about your most successful interventions as an HRD practitioner. Measure success on acceptance by the user, personal satisfaction, or whatever you like. Just several of the most successful ones are all that are needed.

Now, analyze why they were successful. Was it strictly because of your, or some other HRD person's, ability as a trainer, OD consultant, or facilitator? No doubt this helped, but how about the

people involved who were not the HRD folks. How about the operating department that had the problem, the learners, the line people recruited to instruct or otherwise participate? Odds are that their involvement not only made a positive contribution, but made the difference in the ultimate success of the intervention.

In other words, the active involvement of the non-HRD people and *how* they were involved, put the particular event on your success list. Your contribution was not to do a good job of instructing, intervening, or facilitating. Rather, it was to help the line/operating/non-HRD people instruct, intervene, and facilitate. These people have the ultimate responsibility for HRD, not you, the HRD person. This is a sometimes subtle, but important differentiation. The knowledge and experience required are the same. The skills may be somewhat different, at least in executing the approach. The dedication and courage required are indeed different. To deliberately attempt to do your job such that eventually you will not be needed, especially when there is a growing pool of idle laborers, seems to border on the foolish.

Yet this is precisely the challenge for the HRD profession now. To be truly excellent, risks must be taken. Sheldon Kopp stated it nicely when he wrote, "Sometimes it seems to me that in this absurdly random life there is some inherent justice in the outcome of personal relationships. In the long run, we get no more than we have been willing to risk giving."¹ Providing the service for someone else — in the form of helping them do it rather than doing it for them — is this type of investment.

The current model of excellence was recently stated by Blake and Mouton.² They placed the HRD professional's excellence on a sliding scale such that as the trainer's (or OD consultant or whoever's) ability increases, the more dependent grows the line organization/client upon the HRD person. They have identified the condition of "doing for" as the premise of current HRD practice. True excellence can be achieved only in the framework of "showing how to."

As Gardner said, sometimes we have to stop straining so hard to produce whatever it is we are producing and "let the performance happen."³ This is analogous to Blake and Mouton's statement that "... the trainer should be teaching the line how to intervene, not intervening. ..." In other words, let *them* do it. In the long run, it will turn out better. It will last longer, be more meaningful to the recipients, and make everyone involved feel better, even the HRD practitioner who gave it all away.

The summary of this reads like something from a motivational seminar or a pulpit on Sunday morning. Give it away — you'll receive it back a hundred-fold. Share your ideas with others, the profit will be yours in the long run. And so on go the promises.

Yet there's really nothing to fear. With rapidly advancing technology, the increasingly important role of large organizations, and the reality of constant, significant change, the need for HRD support will surely grow. The question is, simply, how does this role get fulfilled — by doers or those who help others to do it?

There is a need for HRD professionals. True professionals survive by showing other people how to keep on doing whatever it is they are supposed to be doing. You can't take the responsibility for completing an OD intervention or successfully conducting a training workshop from the person or group on the receiving end. By definition, the HRD objective is achieved when the recipient, in some manner or other, causes it to be achieved. The role of the HRD person is to make sure the recipient accepts that responsibility, even if it means turning no longer needed office space into a storeroom.

REFERENCES

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2. "HRD Controversy: Ala Blake and Mouton." *Training and Development Journal*. 34:5 (May 1980), 106-8.
3. Gardner, John W. *Morale*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1978.

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