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ASTD

Celebrating

50 Years of Learning
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Voice Mail

Doer's Profile



Brian McNaught

This month's profile features Brian McNaught. McNaught is an author and educator who specializes in gay issues in the workplace. He lives in New York.

What's happening with gay issues in the workplace?

"Corporations are starting to pay attention in more than a cursory way—in nondiscriminatory policies, partner benefits, and gay-employee support groups. Companies are beginning to see that gay and lesbian issues are as serious as other diversity issues. They're starting to care about us as employees and consumers."

What's still the biggest barrier?

"Fear. Companies fear negative responses from other employees and the public. People are afraid that equality in the workplace for gays and lesbians is about protecting behaviors, which are choices. But it's about protecting sexual orientation, which isn't a choice."

What has been your experience in conducting workshops?

"People come in thinking I'm going to talk about sex. But they leave with a

face to put to the whole issue. The most powerful thing I do is tell my own story of what it's like to grow up with a secret. That's when people make their own journey to understanding and acceptance. I find that most heterosexuals are overwhelmingly supportive once they've been given the opportunity to learn what it means to be gay in our society. They finally get it."

What's the goal? "To create an equal playing field in the work environment so that gays and lesbians are evaluated only on their skills."

What would you be doing if you weren't an educator?

"I'd be a healer—a doctor. Actually, I see what I do as healing. Participants often come up and hug me and tell me about their loved ones who have died with AIDS. Or, they see in me perhaps their own children, and they become more tolerant."

organizations in the United States.

Many books and articles of the late fifties and early sixties described MBO and its implementation methods. From 1965 through 1980, the literature on MBO was about using it in different settings—such as police administration and schools. Later writings asked, "Why does MBO fail so often?" Still, few advocated the death of MBO, as I do now.

As faith in MBO began to wane, the approach still hung on in many companies. Many respondents to my surveys said that they just went through the motions. "Once a year, we'd create objectives and then put them in a drawer until the memo

came around again." Once a year isn't enough in the current competitive environment.

One could conclude that if MBO isn't dead, it is at least in the retirement home. The concept of quality offers managers much superior techniques—such as a better systems approach to management, the rational basis of statistics for setting goals, Deming's comprehensive theories, tools such as the Pareto principle for identifying and resolving problems, and the example of the success of the Japanese management style.

On the other hand, MBO is forms without substance, according to one wag. It is ineffective. It doesn't take