

# Training & Development Journal

Published by  
The American Society for Training and Development

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Training & Development Journal, vol. 44, no. 6  
Training & Development Journal (ISSN 0041-0861) is published monthly by the American Society for Training and Development Inc., 1630 Duke St., Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313; 703/683-8100. National Society members receive this publication at the annual subscription rate of \$35 as part of their membership dues (for nonmember rates, see below). Copyright ©1990 by the American Society for Training and Development Inc. All rights reserved. Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the society. Editorial communications should be sent to the editor. Inquiries concerning nonmember subscriptions, advertising, and membership should be addressed to subscription, advertising, and membership departments. Nonmember subscriptions to U.S. addresses, \$60 per year. Foreign subscriptions at higher rates; write for quotation. Rates subject to change without notice. Single copy, \$6 postpaid. Printed in United States of America by The William Byrd Press, 2901 Byrdhill Road, Richmond, VA 23261. Second-class postage paid at Alexandria, Virginia, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send changes of address to Training & Development Journal, 1630 Duke Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.

BPA audit applied for August 1988.

## Tell Us What You Think

"Who Is Us?" That provocative question was posed by Robert Reich in the January/February edition of the *Harvard Business Review*. The answer? The American workforce.

As "global executives" develop (see our cover story) so might a global workforce. Reich points out that while jobs in the U.S. are being wiped out by American companies moving their facilities abroad, new jobs are being created here by foreign companies. For example, Zenith Corporation is the last American television manufacturer on U.S. soil, with about 2,550 employees, while 17 foreign-owned companies produce or assemble TV sets at 20 U.S. plants, employing over 15,000 American workers.

To Reich, that trend implies that if we hope to revitalize the competitive performance of the U.S. economy, we must invest in people, not in nationally defined companies.

Reich asks another question: Which is more important to America's future, the American Zenith company or the foreign-owned companies employing Americans here in our own territory, thereby adding to the skills and training of the American workforce? It is a question that's likely to elicit an emotional as well as a practical response.

However, if Japan, for example, can slurp up 7-11 in a thirst for market share only, yet won't open its arms to an American company like Toys R Us (whose products are largely produced in Asian countries), how do we sharpen our competitive edge, including making steady gains in the competitiveness of American workers?

Send your opinions to "Issues," *Training & Development Journal*, 1630 Duke Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.

## Who's Responsible for Learning?

In response to the "Four by Four" interview in which Judith Canaan said that the instructor is responsible for learning (October 1989), Al Ross states in his letter ("Issues," February 1990) that the learner is responsible for guaranteeing learning. While this belief might provide comfort to unsuccessful instructors (those whose students fail), it is misleading and promotes poor instruction.

The task of an instructor is to manipulate the variables of instruction so that learning takes place. After instruction, students are able to do something they could not do before instruction. The "variables of instruction" include, among other things, the method, rate, and sequence of instruction, incentives provided for progress, and the learning environment. It is the instructor's responsibility to consider all these things, and more, when designing and delivering instruction.

Ross, a vocational educator, should know that one of the first steps in designing instruction is to learn about the target population (see, for instance, *Developing Vocational Instruction* by Mager & Beach). That knowledge enables the instructor to customize instruction to address the internal and external factors to which Ross refers.

The seemingly incorrigible trainees occasionally encountered in mandated training programs can usually be motivated to learn by a skilled instructor. Instructors who shun their responsibility often have students who learn in spite of them, not because of them.

**Kim E. Ruyle**

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## One More Mentor

*In the October 1989 "Issues," we asked you to tell us about your mentors. We received testimonies, which we published in February, to mentors who seem to fall into the*

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category of either models or advisors. Here's an account of how a mentor can both inspire and teach.

I worked with Coleman Finkel, a hotel owner and executive, for 12 years. In hiring me, he showed me that a prospective employee need not be experienced. If someone has motivation, basic skills, and intelligence, and an employer is willing to give direction, care, and training, the inexperienced employee can become productive and loyal.

Looking back over the lessons Coleman taught me, I realize they have become part of my own work ethic. I am struck by how, from the very beginning, he served to reinforce the high standards that have served me so well in my profession.

Coleman often used our meetings as opportunities for learning. He would analyze a situation, stimulate my thinking, and broaden my knowledge. I believe this kind of continuous guidance is critical for effective leadership. From Coleman, I learned several valuable lessons that are part of my own managing style today. They are as follows:

- Whenever possible, make your staff part of any decision making that directly affects their work. They will accept changes more readily, and they are less likely to feel that procedures they don't understand or believe in have been imposed on them.
- Set standards with your staff that provide a performance measurement they themselves can monitor. With specific standards to achieve, judgment evaluations will seldom result in adversarial manager/staff relationships.
- When making staff appraisals, focus on the work and not on personal inadequacies. Create a supportive framework, not an accusatory one. The conclusion of an appraisal should result in a specific, mutually approved plan of action.

### James L. Davis

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## Zenger-Miller, Take a Bow, Please

**Editor's note:** In our March issue, in an article called "Storm Warning" by Ronald Sepielli of the Memorial Medical Center in Savannah, Georgia, we reported on how the hospital used quality skills training in an unexpected way to cope with Hurricane Hugo. We neglected to give credit to the training firm Zenger-Miller, Inc., of San Jose, California, which designed and delivered the training in interpersonal, teamwork, and innovation skills. For more information, you may contact Zenger-Miller at 1735 Technology Drive, San Jose, CA 95110; 408/452-1244.

"Issues" is compiled and edited by Haidee Allerton. Send your views to Issues, Training & Development Journal, 1630 Duke Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.