

In Practice

Dancing Around Diversity

Learning to respect and value workplace diversity starts with self-appraisal, but many people resist taking this first step. Dolly Berthelot, a communications consultant and trainer in Pensacola, Florida, says a light touch can help people take a hard look at themselves.

For her workshop *Creating Unity Within Diversity*, Berthelot devised the Diversity Dance Inventory and Evaluation instrument. She uses the inventory to spark discussions about ways that individuals and organizations deal with—or avoid—issues of workplace diversity.

Here's a sampling of Berthelot's whimsical inventory of ways that people dance around diversity issues—or fall on their faces while struggling to keep up with diversity initiatives. Are employees and managers in your organization making any of the following missteps?

- ▶ **Ostrich Wiggle.** They bury their heads in the sand and deny the changes that diversity brings.
- ▶ **Sabotage Skulk.** They slink behind the scenes, undermining efforts to enhance and embrace diversity.
- ▶ **Tiptoe Sidestep.** They go through the motions of participating in diversity initiatives, but expend no genuine energy or effort.
- ▶ **Wishful Wallflower Waltz.** They want to take part but fear that they might attract an unwelcome spotlight.
- ▶ **Too-Basic Two-Step.** They talk a lot about their commitment to diversity, but never get out on the dance floor.
- ▶ **Crisis Crunch.** They panic and make a last-minute date for the diversity dance to avoid a date in court or other impending calamity. But once they arrive, they pay only perfunctory attention.
- ▶ **Poor-Partner Squirm.** They strug-



James Yang

gle to master the dance of diversity while paired with partners who don't know how to lead.

▶ **Toe-Trampplers' Tumble.** They feel stomped on by diversity "facilitators" who lack the necessary skills, experience, and sensitivity to guide the initiative successfully.

▶ **Panting Pandemonium.** They organize the event, but load the program with so much hoopla that people wind up exhausted, resentful, and ready to pack it in and go home.

Successful organizations understand that mastering the diversity dance requires a long-term commitment to evaluating needs and educating employees, says Berthelot. With thoughtful planning and practice, people can develop the strong relationships that enable them to move in sync toward shared goals while respecting the unique twist that each person contributes.

For more information, contact Berthelot's Consulting, E.T.C., 600 Bayou Boulevard, Pensacola, FL 32503; 904/437-2934.

Do people in your organization find ways to sashay around diversity issues, or do they stumble when they try to play the PC game?

Training in the New World Order

By Lisa McNary, assistant professor of management, Capital University, Columbus, OH 43209.

Power in the new world-pecking order rests on economic, rather than military, might. Moreover, assert pundits such as U.S. Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, nations in the Information Age stoke their economic engines not with natural resources, but with human ones.

If people's knowledge and skills represent businesses' most important assets, then investing in education and training should rank as businesses' top priority, and trainers should be riding a wave of corporate support. Instead, trainers often are among the first to get the ax when corporations cut costs.

Current rhetoric notwithstanding, the United States has always approached training and education paradoxically, with an expressed desire to excel and a demonstrated reluctance to pay the price. Rather than pursuing the best at all costs, the United States seeks the best at no cost.

To champion their role, trainers should encourage their organizations to adopt the systems view of management advocated by the late W. Edwards Deming. A systems view shifts trainers from defensive to offensive positions because it demonstrates the integral role training plays in all organizational processes.

Deming long recognized the importance of education and training. These concerns form two of the 14 points of Deming's management theory, and he closely examined training and education in his last work, *The New Economics for Industry* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1993).

Deming described knowledge as "a scarce national resource" in his landmark 1986 book *Out of the Crisis*. That work served as a reality check for U.S. managers, as Deming blamed bad management for decades of market loss and, in turn, widespread unemployment.

In particular, he charged man-

agers with neglecting long-term planning and problem-solving in favor of a myopic focus on quarterly dividends and short-range goals. He advised managers that their ability to operate successfully in the future would depend on their ability to make full use of their employees' knowledge and expertise.

When businesses cut training budgets in tough times, they deal themselves a double blow: They lose vital programs, and they lose the people who serve to enhance others' knowledge and skills. The losses are incalculable.

If managers view trainers as they do suppliers of essential raw materials, then they are far less likely to cut the supply. Organizations that adopt a systems view of themselves could avoid the folly of cutting training to boost the bottom line.

To Sleep, Perchance To Learn

Sleep may play a pivotal role in learning and memory, suggest two separate studies reported on in the July 29 issue of *Science*.

Researchers at the Weizmann Institute in Israel taught the same visual task to two sets of subjects just before the subjects went to sleep at night.

One set of subjects was awakened frequently during periods of "slow-wave" sleep. The other set was awakened as often during periods of rapid-eye-movement sleep. Subjects who were awakened during slow-wave sleep improved their skill at the task overnight, while REM-deprived subjects showed no improvement.

In a different study, Matthew Wilson and Bruce McNaughton of the University of Arizona found that rats' brain cells during slow-wave sleep repeated the same "firing pattern" associated with places they had explored earlier in the day, except that the firing was compressed into a shorter time period. The findings suggest that during sleep, rats strengthen their memories of place.

A brief on the studies released by Reuter was published in the July 29 *Washington Post*.

Heightening Awareness of Disabilities: A Quiz To Spark Discussion

Title 1 of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) took effect this year for businesses with 15 to 24 workers. Title 1 has applied to businesses with 25 or more workers since July 2, 1992.

Title 1 bars companies from discriminating against qualified people with disabilities. The law also requires employers to make reasonable accommodations to enable people with disabilities to perform jobs for which they are qualified.

To comply with both the letter and the spirit of the law, employers must ensure that all employees can interact comfortably and productively with people who have disabilities.

A quiz to break down barriers. The Idea Bank of Santa Barbara, California, has created the following quiz as a companion to its "Video-Guide to (Dis)ability Awareness." The quiz can serve as a starting point for discussions aimed at breaking down invisible barriers of bias.

Ask people to answer true or false to the following questions about people with disabilities:

- ▶ 1. People who are blind acquire a "sixth sense" for directing themselves.
- ▶ 2. Most people who use wheelchairs have multiple disabilities and need help in communicating.
- ▶ 3. When someone is in a wheelchair, it's polite to provide help before you've been asked.
- ▶ 4. More than 65 percent of all people who have cerebral palsy are also mentally disabled.
- ▶ 5. Cancer, diabetes, AIDS, epilepsy, dyslexia, and mental illness are all examples of "hidden" disabilities that are covered by the Americans With Disabilities Act.
- ▶ 6. In contrast to common belief, fewer than half of all people who are blind use braille.
- ▶ 7. If you're helping a person who uses a seeing-eye dog, petting the animal to make it feel more comfortable is OK.
- ▶ 8. It's appropriate to sit down when you're speaking to someone in a wheelchair.

► 9. Children who are curious should be allowed to ask people about their disabilities.

► 10. People with developmental disabilities such as Down syndrome should not be expected to handle technical tasks such as dealing with money transactions or operating computer equipment.

Answers to quiz questions. Here are the answers:

► 1. False. Although many people who are blind develop their remaining senses more fully, they do not have a "sixth sense."

► 2. False. Most people who use wheelchairs can speak for themselves.

► 3. False. Simply ask the person to let you know if he or she needs help. There is a wide range of physical abilities among those who use wheelchairs.

► 4. False. This is a common misunderstanding, but most people who have cerebral palsy do not have mental disabilities.

► 5. True. Examples of hidden "disabilities" not covered by the ADA include sexual behavior disorders, illegal drug use, and compulsive gambling.

► 6. True. People who are blind and do not read braille use various methods such as audiotaped instructions and verbal descriptions to gather information.

► 7. False. For safety, a seeing-eye dog needs to be alert and undistracted while working (in harness). Avoid treating the dog the way you would a pet.

► 8. True. Try to sit down in order to share the same eye level. If seating is not available, give the person some space. Standing too close while you talk creates an uncomfortable viewing angle for a person who is in a wheelchair.

► 9. True. Scolding children for asking questions may cause them to think there is something bad about having a disability. Most people with disabilities won't mind answering a child's questions.

► 10. False. People with developmental disabilities are successfully employed in positions throughout the country that involve such technical tasks as dealing with money transactions and operating computer equipment.

Resources on Employees With Disabilities

Need more information on employees with disabilities and the Americans With Disabilities Act? Try the following articles that have appeared recently in *Training & Development*.

► "A Kentucky Response to the ADA," by Ed Klee, Laurence Hayes, and Gene W. Childress. April 1994.

► "A Trainer With Disabilities," by Ann Marie Killion. March 1994.

► "A Time for Action: Responding to AIDS," by Laura B. Pincus and Shefali M. Trivedi. January 1994.

► "Doing the Right Thing for Employees With Disabilities," by Albert S. King. September 1993.

► "The Mad Hatters' Approach to ADA Training," by D. Kerry Laycock and Roberta Robinson. September 1992.

To purchase reprints of these articles, please contact ASTD Customer Service at 703/683-8100. Use priority code BXM. Single-article photocopies are \$6 each; the package is \$15. Phone for prices on bulk orders (50 or more) of custom reprints. Call to order by credit card, or send your order to ASTD Customer Service, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313-2043.

New Journal Launched

The Association for Management Education and Development (AMED) launched a new journal in January aimed at managers concerned with individual and organizational development.

Organisations & People, published by AMED and Kogan Page, focuses on helping practitioners in the field apply new academic insights. Recent articles have addressed such topics as establishing a learning organization and learning leadership. In 1994, the journal also published case studies of a day in the life of a development manager, employee involvement in a small business, and the role of a professional development institute.

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The journal's editors have issued a call for articles on such topics as change management, strategy implementation, and globalization. They also seek case studies that illustrate these topics.

Contact Prabhu Gupta, Editor, Organisations & People, AMED, 14/15 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PS.

Telecommunications Training for China

AT&T has developed an advanced training program for senior managers from China's Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, as part of the firm's commitment to help the People's Republic of China build its telecommunications

infrastructure. The training program concentrates on the theories, concepts, and processes of operating a modern telecommunications business in a market economy. The program stems from a 1993 agreement signed by AT&T and the Chinese State Planning Council to establish a long-term partnership.

As part of the program, senior and midlevel managers from China attend classes at Bell Laboratories in the United States, where they get hands-on experience with recent developments in visual and wireless communications, voice processing, and networked computing. Participants also tour AT&T's Network Operations Center, the heart of the company's worldwide intelligent network.

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MANAGING STRATEGIC CHANGE

Job Hopping

If you've had five jobs in 10 years, you risk being labeled a "job-hopper," reports a survey commissioned by Robert Half International, a staffing-services firm headquartered in Menlo Park, California.

An independent research firm asked executives from the 1,000 largest U.S. companies the following question: "Over a 10-year span, how many job changes would it take to be labeled a job-hopper?" The mean response from the 150 survey respondents was five changes.

With many corporations downsizing and merging, shorter spans of employment carry less of a stigma than they once did, says Max Messmer, chair and CEO of Robert Half International. Nonetheless, anyone considering a change first should look for ways to improve his or her current situation. "Be sure you've explored all your options and discussed concerns with your manager," he says.

But avoid staying in a job for the wrong reasons, Messmer advises. "If your self-esteem and productivity are suffering, your efforts to remain in your current position may do more harm than good."

This month's "In Practice" was edited and written by Erica Gordon Sorohan. Send items of interest to "In Practice," Training & Development, 1640 King Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313-2043.