

"IF HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF NEW MANAGERS MUST BE DEVELOPED AND TRAINED, YOU AND I AS TRAINERS WILL HAVE TO LEARN HOW TO DO IT *BETTER AND FASTER.*"

# WHITHER T&D — AND YOU?

BY ABBOTT P.  
SMITH

Several years ago Larry Porter, editor of the "OD Practitioner," posed the problem that many organization development professionals had "serious doubts in their minds about the career they had chosen. Some even ask if OD . . . is here to stay?" My very positive answer at that time was printed as an article in the Practitioner. Based on the increase in the number of OD positions to be filled that we are getting in 1980, it is clear that my prediction was correct. OD, as a part of the total training and development process, is definitely here to stay.

The same things can be said about all the rest of the T&D field: it's growing in both numbers of people involved and in importance in the business community. Despite occasional negative vibes, the evidence is conclusive that Training and Development people must be doing much that is right. Additionally, the role of trainers is constantly expanding into new areas. This, coupled with the increased professionalism of most

training practitioners, has led to vastly increased respect for the function in the business world and consequent improvement in both salaries paid and in the hierarchical standing of training and development people.

OD is only one of the aspects or fields within training and development that has expanded. What we used to call "technical training" has gone far. In the early days of World War II, training got tremendous impetus from the need to teach farmers how to work on an assembly line or to run a drill press, or to train "the lady welder" to build a ship. Today very highly sophisticated learning technology is used to teach workers how to assemble intricate electronic machinery, operate nuclear ships or generating plants. As our technology expands, our *learning* technology must keep up. The process of special training is similar in nearly all the other aspects of training, and as a result we now have an increasing number of categories of training specialists.

Let's take a look at just one seemingly simple area in which the

training process has expanded, and may yet explode in unpredictable ways. Almost 40 years ago when I started as a sales trainer, we were concerned almost exclusively with what were euphemistically called "sales techniques." Many were such ridiculous gimmicks as "how to get your foot in the door" — literally — when selling house-to-house. How childish that seems today when salesmen must study for hours, as a part of their training, with psychologists who teach them how they should study their customers' primal needs and make their presentations responsive thereto. Think about the tremendous amount of product training that must be done today for salesmen who sell computers, complex office machinery and equipment, x-ray scanners, specialized drugs, electronic machine tools, airplanes and thousands of other sophisticated products.

Think, too, about the different kinds of selling that people are trained in today — original equipment manufacturing sales, selling to chain stores, doctors, school

systems, "political" selling of liquor to monopoly states, consumer selling and endless other types of selling. Service industries must train in selling intangibles: bankers are taught to sell loans, and tellers to sell other bank services; insurance salesmen are specially trained. All these subjects require training specialists to do the job.

Years ago a sales training manager in one of these fields had to know and do it all. Today there may be three or four people in a single sales-training organization, each responsible for a different aspect or for several parts of the sales-training process. Of course, in some companies a sales trainer may be basically a coordinator, with responsibility for planning and organizing the training process, and for bringing in "experts" or "specialists" within or outside the company to teach particular parts of a training program. It is clear that sales training has expanded greatly in importance and in its sophistication, particularly in the psychological aspects of sales, and in the process by which product knowledge is taught.

There's probably no part of T and D that has grown more — and continues to expand more — than the total area of management development. When this field first became a need in business, it was the lowest level of management which was perceived to need training. Top management didn't need training, of course — they already knew it all!

Many different influences brought about the initial supervisory training programs. Probably most significant was the impact of labor contracts and the problems created for the lower levels of management — foremen, supervisors and lower-level managers. Grievances and unexpected walk-outs had to be avoided if possible and reduced to a minimum. Supervisors and foremen had to be taught terms of contracts, how to handle grievances at their own level, and, most importantly for those days, how to deal more effectively with their workers, how to get more work done through others — the basic principle of

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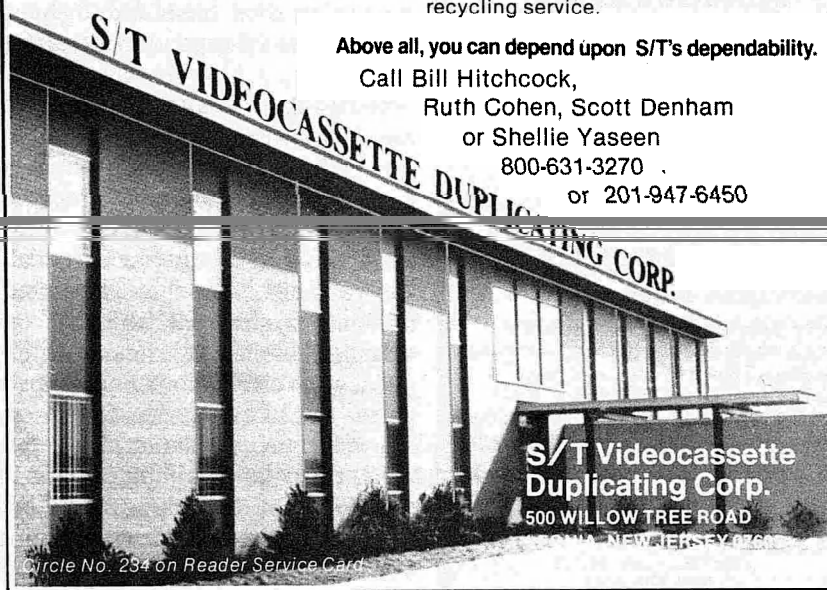
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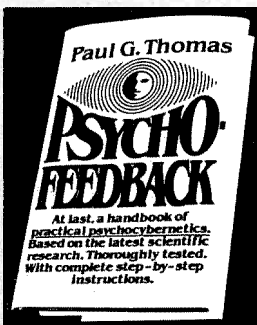


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management.

Other aspects of the management process — planning, organizing, controlling — came later, and began to be taught at higher and higher management levels. After all, it wasn't too long ago that many managers "got there" by virtue of living long enough, owning part of the company, or marrying the boss's daughter! Think what's happened to training since then.

Seriously, management development is really big business, both internally and externally in most large companies today. Not only do major corporations have large training staffs and even corporate "universities," but they also spend millions on external training consultants. Time, salaries and expenses are often allowed for appropriate graduate courses in universities for management personnel. Also, probably a billion dollars or more is spent on various media and equipment purchased for training purposes. While some small part of this tremendous amount of management training activity may have dubious validity and therefore not "pay off" at the famous "bottom line," it has created general acceptance of the process and a desire to do more in a vast majority of the medium to large companies. Everyone seems to be trying to improve management through training, including top management.

Speaking of top people, it's interesting to note that top management no longer feels that middle and lower management alone need to be trained. They themselves take courses, or hire specialists to teach them more about everything from speech-making to how to use the subtleties of behavioral psychology in their practice of management.

### Roles and Opportunities

A year ago an impressively successful ASTD committee on professional development came up with nine roles of the professional trainer. The interesting thing to me is that in *each* of those roles there are avenues for personal development and opportunity which can lead to great heights both

financially and in personal accomplishment and satisfaction. These exist on their own without even aspiring to be the ultimate generalist who would be master of all nine! In fact, in this modern world of specialization, for many of us the victory may be in being the best in some of the nine, or even *one*. One of the highest paid OD men we know is now *purely* a counselor to a few top management people in his company on what I'll call "human problem solving." He deals almost exclusively with his employers in solving the human problems that develop in the organization at the higher levels. An equally highly paid "training specialist" is charged with the responsibility of updating the knowledge of thousands of engineers in his company who work in a great variety of engineering specialties. These training professionals do not need to know or be able to fill all *nine* of the roles delineated by the Professional Development Committee, but either of them knows *how to use* other training professionals — program developers, instructors, researchers, trainers of trainers, consultants or whatever specialists may be needed to get the job done.

What I hope my fellow trainers will see is the opportunity to use your greatest talents to rise to the top of the profession. There is honor and profit in being the best in a particular role or specialty. I am sometimes saddened by the aspiration of stellar performers in particular areas to be "Directors of Human Resources" or "Training Directors" or to win other glamorous management titles. I am reminded of the outstanding salespeople who so often fail as sales managers. Why not strive simply to be the *best* at what you *do* best? Obviously, many of you can be best at many roles, and that's great. But in general terms, and considering the great variety of special roles within the nine mentioned by the Committee, there is more than adequate financial and personal reward for being the best at your best.

How do you get there? Our profession is attracting more and

more attention from outsiders who "want in." We are often asked not only *how* to get in, but more intelligent questions about what kind of qualifications and experience one needs for our profession. What is the best educational background, the best degree? What kind of "outside" experience is the best foundation for success in training?

Similarly, trainers themselves often flatter us with questions about how they can best improve their standing and opportunities in the profession. To be honest, we don't dare say there's a basic, essential foundation for training success, because our profession includes superb individuals from almost every conceivable background. Often there is no apparent relevance of background to training. Some of the best don't even have degrees, though they're few and far between. Others have a Ph.D. or two, and some have been teachers, priests, ministers, engineers, entrepreneurs, line managers in big corporations — or what have you!

But almost all good trainers have certain basic qualities underlying whatever qualifications they may have. With rare exceptions they are "people people" — they like working with and especially *helping* other people. Sure, some of the best instructors simply enjoy the sound of their own voices and love to perform in front of a group. Some of the best program-development people enjoy researching needs and writing program materials, roughing out the art for audio visuals, and perhaps producing films, filmstrips or transparencies. But underlying all of this is almost always an intense desire to communicate what they know to other human beings. The best OD people are almost always — but *not* always — graduates in psychology, and at the very least know, understand and *love* other people. Even those often underrated technical trainers get their real kicks out of being able to see their students — people — do something they couldn't do before, or do something better than

they've done it before.

We feel we can safely say that you are most likely to succeed as a trainer, assuming other special qualifications, education and experience, if you enjoy other people and working with them.

So much for qualities. Now on to qualifications, educationally and experientially. I'm going to try to treat them jointly because each bears so closely on the other. Some employers favor those who have a degree involving at least a minor in psychology. This stems from the importance of *really* knowing as much as possible about why and how people "tick." But psychology is not essential, and most of you know how few of us "old pros" in the training business have psychology degrees. Nevertheless, for the future pros, it will be most helpful. Knowledge of learning theory, of how people learn, and of instructional technology is becoming critical, especially in the development of the best training programs.

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those in companies which have a fairly sophisticated training organization, increasingly prefer trainers with educational background in psychology and educational technology. We often say to candidates who are already successful practitioners with this background that they should do some graduate study in these fields if they possibly can. If that is impossible, we suggest books and journals which will give them greater knowledge in these two areas.

Obviously, business related experience is helpful. Even though we have a hard time getting companies to hire people from the public sector, we feel many teachers make good trainers. Some teachers might be disasters in training just as they would in other aspects of the "real world" of business. Most successful trainers have had at least some solid business experience in either line or staff positions, and often some teaching experience.

As our profession has grown in numbers and importance, we get more and more letters which say "I am considering a career change into the training field." These come from people in all areas of business as well as from many of the professions, especially teaching and the ministry. Related experience? It's hard to say without meeting with the letter writers, but very often the combination of the right underlying education plus some good business experience makes such a career change possible, assuming, of course, the peculiarly human desire to help others which we discussed earlier.

### Self Improvement and Advancement

For trainers, the problem is often how to *improve* their qualifications educationally and by experience so that they can develop. Graduate school, of course. Professional seminars and conferences, too. More importantly, perhaps, trainers should think about two basic needs. Many trainers don't progress as they should because they are "stuck" in one industry. People doing training in a service industry may find that their progress requires a change to manu-

facturing, or vice versa. Though it's hard to do, we like to see younger trainers get experience in as many aspects of training as possible — skills, sales, supervisory, management training, OD, program development, etc. Often this is not possible in a single company, and although you may have to move to get it, there's real danger to a career from "job hopping" just to get experience.

Similarly, we like to see people who have some considerable *depth* in a particular training function, such as program development, needs analysis, evaluation, even heavy instructing and train-the-trainer responsibility. Our client companies also want trainers, especially at higher levels, who have had management responsibility on the way. Interestingly, companies prefer that the management experience has been on the business — profit and loss — side, rather than just in training itself. This is especially true of sales training, where field experience as a salesperson and sales manager is almost

essential to getting a top sales-training position.

We can't fairly leave this subject without talking about consulting as a contributor to personal development in our field. Some of our client companies do not want to hire consultants, and won't unless they have had some solid experience internal to a business. Some employers say flat out not to send candidates who are or have been consultants. We believe the basis of this attitude may be the fear that consultants will "use" the employer to get certain experience and special knowledge, and then go back into consulting. Ideally, all employers hope they are hiring "for life" and they don't want to feel that a candidate may leave after a couple of years. Another fear is that consultants may not be able to take the strictures of the corporate framework. This fear may stem from jealousy of the "freedom" that employers think consultants have, especially individuals who have worked alone.

Despite all this, we think that a

stint as a consultant working with a variety of clients over a period of time may be a good developmental step for some trainers, if they are on their way to the top.

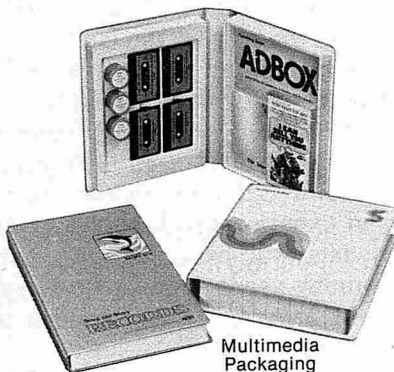
Where's the "top" — and how can you make it? Once again, I am faced with the necessity to define where the "top" is, and to tell how to get there. There is always a limited number of positions at the "top" of any occupational category, equally so in training and development. I am increasingly conscious that top positions are going to outstanding specialists who have had considerable exposure to *all* areas and some management responsibilities in their own special areas of expertise. Top salaries run from \$30,000 to \$100,000, depending on numerous factors such as size of company, location, commitment to training as expressed in staff and facilities, and other factors.

It seems clear that as our profession develops its variety of specialties that there is another kind of top which trainers can aspire to and achieve. That is to be

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clearly the best in some special area and to get the experience, depth and all possible relevant education in that specialty. There are many "tops" in this sense, and there are many professional specialists in various areas getting salaries from \$30,000 to \$60,000, again depending on company size, sophistication, etc.

I should point out that there are also many opportunities to have a "one-person show" which pays very well. These can exist either in small companies or in divisions or subsidiaries of giant companies. It is not unusual for us to get assignments for what are often called "individual contributor" generalist positions at salaries from \$30,000 to \$50,000. In other words, if you want to do your own thing as a big fish in a small puddle, there are opportunities to do so. Two words of caution for the trainer who wants to grow and improve: first, it may be a lonely life out there by yourself; second, one of the best ways to grow is to have peers and superiors with whom you can share and test your ideas, and from whom you can also learn.

I cannot conclude without making some long range predictions for

the future of the profession of which I have been a part for so many years. Crystal balling is a lot of fun.

First, let's think about management development as a part of training and development. There have been innumerable articles in the business press about the future need for managers. Estimates are always in the hundreds of thousands. Our profession will be called upon to help develop those people as they move through various real-life experiences in business. Certainly experience is the best teacher, but what the vast majority of businesses have come to realize is that experience alone cannot do the job *fast enough or thoroughly enough* to meet the need.

A simple example of two will make this point. The average first-level supervisor has only certain management responsibilities. Let's assume that the next step up the management ladder they will be expected to understand the management of the parts inventory needed to produce a product which up to now they have simply received on the assembly line through some "magical" process they never had to worry about. Someone must teach them that next critical process. Similarly, as they move to bottom-line responsibilities, they must have training in certain aspects of finance and so on, all the way up the ladder. New knowledge and skills must be acquired — through training. The same is true in varying ways for management trainees as they move through different responsibilities and experiences. Training professionals will have to analyze the training needs, develop and implement programs to accomplish this training.

If hundreds of thousands of new managers must be developed and trained, you and I as trainers will have to learn how to do it *better and faster*.

We've already discussed technical or skills training, but did not touch on one significant aspect of the future needs in this field of training. New technologies create new skills needs and make old skills obsolete. The people who did jobs which may no longer exist

must be taught new ones in order to be able to work at all. Witness the rapid change from electro-mechanical to electronic manufacturing. This type of change is occurring in so many areas so fast that many technical and skills trainers will be needed to keep up with change as it impacts on production processes. And the trainers themselves will have to be adept at the use of the most advanced applications of learning theory and using the most sophisticated training tools, methodologies and techniques.

Finally, a quick look at the most critical problem of all, and the umbrella for all training and human resource development — organizational development or "OD." We think that business has quite generally accepted the contribution of behavioral psychology to making people work together more effectively. In fact, we see this as almost the "crisis of the future" if companies do not make serious efforts to resolve the problems in this area. New generations of workers, as at Lordstown, have different attitudes, points of view, life values and aspirations. All these will be coming into greater and more threatening conflict with older generations, and with one another, as they mature and are in turn met with an even younger generation. While we think of OD as dealing essentially at the management levels, it is also the last best hope, in my estimation, for helping management and the new generations to work well together. While behavioral psychology is not and cannot be an exact science because of the nature of humanity, the well-educated behavioral-science practitioner who can work effectively in solving human problems is sure to be needed and wanted in the business community. Based on the increasing demand for these professionals now, we see virtually no end to the need for them in the future.

A training specialist and consultant for 30 years, Abbott Smith established his own firm in 1966. Several of his books have been published by Prentice Hall, and numerous articles have appeared in professional magazines.

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