

MEASURING THE PAYOFF IN MANAGEMENT TRAINING

BY DONNA B McNAMARA
AND RUTH D. SALINGER

A clear highlight of ASTD's new directions for 1978 was the First Annual Invitational Research Conference held Oct. 31-Nov. 2 at Kellogg West in Pomona, Calif. Sponsored by the ASTD Research Committee, the conference was another first for the Society. Further, it provided a unique forum for both researchers and human resource development practitioners to present, critique and thrash through issues related to the conference theme of "Evaluating the Payoff of Management Training." In tone, the conference was focused, collegial and brisk.

In designing the conference and selecting papers for presentation, the Research Committee balanced levels of evaluation, types of programs represented, and kinds of contributing organizations. Levels of measurement ranged from participant reaction and classroom learning to on-the-job behavior and final outcomes or results. Programs being evaluated represented: courses in generic managerial

skills, executive development seminars, single topic classes, policy simulations, university-based programs, and organizational development interventions. Participants exchanged a cross section of views from business and industry, government, private consulting and academia.

Four key issues conceptually framed the conference. The two-and-one-half day event opened with informal "cracker barrel" discussions of these issues. A round table and facilitator were assigned for each topic. Participants spontaneously joined and moved among the tables, shaping discussions and contributing what were often diverse perspectives. The four focusing issues were:

- How is management training similar to and different from other types of training?
- What are the purposes of evaluating management training and how can we focus on those when starting to do an evaluation?
- What are the methodological concerns in evaluating management training?
- Why aren't more management

training programs evaluated? What are the organizational considerations?

Each of the 22 invited participants played a specific role as presenter, discussant or client panel member. Presenters summarized their evaluation projects, describing research objectives, methodology and results. As a whole, they were straightforward about problems, constraints and difficulties encountered in design and implementation. After each presentation, two discussants formally critiqued the evaluation effort, emphasizing design factors.

Following formal critiques, a full forum was opened for questions, clarification and elaboration of issues. The client panel check-pointed presentations from the organizational perspectives of feasibility and return on investment. During the closing session, Research Committee members synthesized proceeding by summarizing what had been learned concerning the four focusing issues. Karen Brethower of Chase Manhattan Bank shared expert observations and proposed strategies

for further advancing the initiation and quality of management training evaluation studies.

Publication Preview

Full proceedings of the First Annual Invitational Research Conference are presently being compiled and edited for publication by ASTD later this year. In addition to papers and discussant remarks, the text will incorporate focusing issues, client panel perspectives and summary observations. As preparation for this upcoming publication, here is a preview of the conference papers:

"Designing Guidelines for Evaluating the Outcomes of Management Training" summarizes one major corporation's current project to provide guidelines for use throughout the organization when evaluating management training. The guidelines stress the need to decide up front the evaluation purpose, what decisions will be based on evaluation results, and the kinds of information the study should produce. The project emphasizes there is no point in going after data that is not needed or will not be used. In using the document, an evaluator considers both the conditions under which the investigation will be conducted and any organizational constraints. Based on these factors, the best evaluation design is selected.

Participant reaction measures are addressed in a paper summarizing the results of policy forecasting simulation programs used with high-level government officials. Questionnaires solicited participant perceptions of the benefits derived from the simulation exercises. This presentation demonstrates that reaction data can indeed extend beyond "happiness" ratings. It also points out that for certain types of learning experiences participant reactions may be the most appropriate data to obtain, at least in the short run.

A study comparing the effectiveness of two human resource development programs within a social-service setting demonstrates the use of control groups and several levels of measurement. In the evaluation, both a management development training program and

an organizational development effort were assessed to determine their respective impact on organizational climate and performance. Different county welfare departments received one or the other type of program. Control counties received no intervention. The management development training produced mixed results, whereas, the OD effort positively impacted both climate and performance. Ironically, organizational performance also improved in the control groups where there was no intervention. The paper discusses possible reasons for these results and how the reasons were identified through analysis of logs which the evaluators maintained throughout the course of the study.

The session on *"Evaluating an Executive Development Program at a College of Business Administration"* offered interesting results. Comparisons were made between a group of executives attending a four-week college program and an untrained group. Variables measured how each

group's subordinates viewed the executives' leadership practices and their own job satisfaction. The results were the opposite from what was expected — perceived leadership practices and job satisfaction of subordinates went down after the executives returned from the program. For the control group, which did not have any training, the measures went up.

Often we find management training programs lacking specifically stated objectives. Although its application is not limited to this condition, action planning offers a systematic approach to assessing program effectiveness when objectives have not been clearly delineated. Two conference papers discuss the design and implementation of action planning in different organizational settings. The projects are similar in their attempts to measure behavioral change and on-the-job performance resulting from training. Further, both projects emphasize the importance of incorporating individuals' priorities when setting



Systran offers International Technical Training Programs.

systran

Systems for International Training

The following is a partial list of our services:

- English as a second Language/ESL-EFL
- Pre-Technical and Vocational English
- Curriculum Design and Development
- Training the Trainer
- Transcultural Orientations
- Language Simplification
- Foreign Language Training
- Technical and Vocational Training in English and Foreign Languages
- Computerized Translations

Join us at the ASTD
National Conference
in St. Louis at Booth 224.

For further information please call or write:

Systran Corporation
Marketing Department
70 West Hubbard St.
Chicago, Illinois 60610
Telephone (312) 321-0707

Circle No. 141 on Reader Service Card

posttraining objectives. Differences between the studies include follow-up data-gathering procedures and the degree to which the strategy attempts to incorporate economic equivalence.

Evaluations of awareness-training programs for managers present unique challenges, as is evidenced in the description of a comprehensive study conducted to measure the effectiveness of one major utility's large scale program. The company's program attempts to improve male/female relationships, and ultimately organizational productivity, through sensitizing managers to the particular concerns of individuals holding nontraditional jobs — males in clerical positions, females in craft and management jobs. Training objectives for the program had only been vaguely stated. The evaluator describes attempts to get around the problem of vague objectives through developing a variety of procedures to measure the impact of the training. Measures assess immediate and indi-

vidual effect as well as long-range and organizational impact.

The final three papers move beyond measures of behavior change and juxtapose approaches to measuring organizational payoff of management training in fiscal terms. The first presentation describes a generalized model for determining value in which the worth of managerial positions and functions is economically calculated. The second paper assesses managerial training programs *vis-a-vis* cost efficiency of management's performance. The final paper of the conference, probably the most elaborate, incorporates a linear programming approach in an economic model for evaluating the impact of management training on technical productivity.

Learning from the Conference

Learning from the conference included an increased awareness and understanding of the focusing issue — the need to decide or agree on the evaluation purpose and then design the study accord-

ingly. Evaluation design itself also became more focused, including the range of alternatives and the need to thoroughly think through the usefulness and practicality of data-gathering techniques. Participants agreed an organization will probably not have resources to evaluate all programs and some efforts may not be as thorough as others. Further, if for one reason or another it is unlikely a program is going to be changed, it is probably not worth the effort to evaluate it at that time. With evaluation resources being limited in the first place, it is critical to invest resources where there is the highest probability of organizational payoff.

As mentioned earlier, the complete publication of conference proceedings will be available through ASTD later this year. Special applause goes to Dr. Richard O. Peterson (AT&T) who, as 1978 ASTD Research Committee chairperson, assumed leadership for coordinating the conference as well as editing the book of proceedings. Committee members also appreciate the support received from both the 1978 and 1979 ASTD national presidents and the four organizations which contributed generously to the financial support for the conference: American Telephone and Telegraph Co., American Management Associations, General Motors Foundation and Xerox Learning Systems.

Donna B. McNamara is a training supervisor with C&P Telephone in Washington, D.C. Previously she conducted management training programs and evaluation projects for business and government. Dr. McNamara is senior author of *Preparing for Affirmative Action: A Handbook for Practical Training*.

Ruth D. Salinger is an employee development specialist with the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (formerly the Civil Service Commission). Over the past eight years, she has led major research and evaluation projects designed to improve the state of training management and training professionalism in the federal government.

She and Dr. McNamara are members of ASTD's Research Committee.



THE CORPORATE MBA PROGRAM!

We have the answer to the training and development dilemma of how you renew key management skills and prevent obsolescence -- without costly lost time.

Nova University will form a cluster at your corporate location for as few as 25 students. We send the faculty to you. Managers can select from two applied, practical degree programs:

MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (MBA)
MASTER OF SCIENCE/HUMAN
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (HRM)

Classes every third weekend, on Friday evening and Saturday, enable the busy person to work full-time and still complete all degree requirements (12 courses; 36 credits) in only 18 months. For more information on our innovative corporate MBA/HRM programs, call or write for our Bulletin, or contact:

Dr. Martin I. Veiner
Graduate Management Programs
Nova University
3301 College Ave.
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida 33314
(305) 587-6660

An equal opportunity educator accredited by Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Circle No. 145 on Reader Service Card