

Part IV FOCUS ON SKILLS



INTERACTIVE SKILL 4: TEACHING AND PRESENTATION

In February 2004, the British Learning and Skills Council published the results of a Survey of 72,000 public and private employers that showed 22 per cent of them reporting skill shortages as impeding the development of their businesses and impairing productivity. To some extent this seems to be an endemic British problem, with similar dire warnings being produced from time to time, for at least the last sixty years, as British output per worker continues to lag behind that of other Western economies. However, the need for training is universal and increasing, as few people can rely in their middle years on the skills they acquired in their youth. Indeed, few people can rely in the future on the skills they acquired last year.

A central function of HRM is to enable people to learn. There are all manner of ways in which this can be done, especially with the development of technical aids, but here we concentrate on the face-to-face learning situations of teaching and presentation. Many people visualise teaching as a process in which someone who knows instructs someone who does not; but enabling people to learn goes beyond simple instruction. Learners frequently have to discover for themselves, as this is the only way in which they will understand, and they frequently can only learn by their interaction with other people in a group, as it is the group process alone that can help them develop their social skills.

The objectives of this Focus on skills are to:

- 1 Review various approaches to learning
- 2 Describe different types of learner
- 3 Explain job instruction
- 4 Explain features of presentation

Teaching a person to do something is different from teaching someone to understand something, and understanding something intellectually is different from understanding and changing how you interact with other people.

Approaches to learning

Different types of learning require fundamentally different methods and approaches by the teacher. One popular classification is to distinguish between memorising, understanding and doing (MUD). This classification was the result of research by Downs and Perry (1987), who identified blockages to learning, especially by adults, and was widely promoted in the late 1980s by, among others, the Manpower Services Commission. A more detailed classification was shown in the CRAMP taxonomy (ITRU 1976), developed after a study of the work of the Belbins (Belbin and Belbin 1972) and following an earlier analysis by Bloom (1956). This system divides all learning into five basic types.

- 1 *Comprehension* is where the learning involves knowing how, why and when certain things happen, so that learning has only taken place when the learner understands: not simply when the learner has memorised. Examples include having enough understanding of how German grammar works to be able to get the words of a sentence in the right order, or knowing enough of the law of employment to decide whether or not someone has been dismissed unfairly.
- 2 *Reflex learning* is involved when skilled movements or perceptual capacities have to be acquired, involving practice as well as knowing what to do. Speed is usually important and the task needs constant repetition to develop the appropriate synchronisation and coordination. Many of the obvious examples lie outside the interests of most personnel managers, such as juggling, gymnastics or icing a cake, but there are many examples in most organisations, such as driving a fork-lift truck, spot welding, fault-finding and typing. One of the most widespread in management circles is the use of a keyboard.
- 3 *Attitude development* is enabling people to develop the capacity to alter their attitudes and improve their social skills. Much customer care training has this as its basis. The theory is that dealing with customers requires people to be confident of their own ability to deal with others, shedding some of their feelings of insecurity and discovering how they are able to elicit a positive response. This can partly be achieved by the process of 'scripting', whereby staff have a set formula to follow. We are all familiar with making a telephone call which brings a response along the lines of, 'Good morning. Bloggs, Blenkinsop, Huggins and Scratchit. Mandy speaking. How may I help you?' The woodenness of that method can be overcome by enabling people to develop positive attitudes about themselves and their relationships with others, so that they can cope effectively with other people in a variety of situations, including the telephone.

- 4 *Memory training* is a way of enabling trainees to remember how to handle a variety of given situations. Pharmacists learn by rote a series of maximum dosages, for example, and an office messenger will need to remember that all invoices go to Mr Brown and all cheques to Mrs Smith. Anyone who is good with figures has probably at some time learned their multiplication tables. When doing it, this is a terrible chore, yet it is fundamental to any facility with numbers. Police officers remember the registration numbers of cars better than most of us, and we all need to remember telephone numbers and PINs. Memory training is distinguished from comprehension because understanding is not necessary, only recall, and it is worth referring back to the example above of understanding German grammar. Learning grammatical rules by rote does not enable one to use that knowledge, because understanding is also required. Learning your PIN does not require any understanding at all.
- 5 *Procedural learning* is similar to memory except that the drill to be followed does not have to be memorised, but located and understood. An example is the procedure to be followed in shutting down a plant at Christmas, or dealing with a safety drill.

Most forms of training involve more than one type of learning, so that the apprentice vehicle mechanic will need to understand how the car works as well as practising the skill of tuning an engine, and the driver needs to practise the skill of coordinating hands, feet and eyes in driving as well as knowing the procedure to follow if the car breaks down. Broadly speaking, however, comprehension-type learning is best approached by a method that teaches the whole subject as an entity rather than splitting it up into pieces and taking one at a time. Here the lecture or training manual is typically used. Attitude change is now often handled by group discussion, but reflex learning is best handled by part methods, which break the task down into sections, each of which can be studied and practised separately before being put together as a complete performance, just as a tennis player will practise the serve, the smash, the forehand, the backhand and other individual strokes before playing a match in which all are used. Memory and procedural learning may take place either by whole or by part methods, although memorisation is usually best done by parts.

ACTIVITY IV.1

- 1 Think of things that you have learned in the recent past and identify whether the learning was comprehension, reflex, attitude development, memorisation or procedural.
- 2 How would you classify learning for the following?

Swimming	Selection interviewing
Calorie counting in a diet	Learning Russian
Parenting	Running a business
Safe lifting	Preparing for retirement



Types of learner

Learners differ according to their prior knowledge, the quality and nature of their previous education and their age. CRAMP (comprehension, reflex learning, attitude development, memory training, procedural learning) was based on research among adults and most of the teaching carried out under the aegis of HRM is with adults, so we need some understanding of how learners differ. An excellent analysis has been produced by Robert Quinn (1988) based on earlier work by Dreyfus *et al.* (1986). It also appears in Quinn's work on management skills (Quinn *et al.* 1990). He believes that mastery of an activity involves a learning process that takes place over an extended period of time and that the capacity to learn evolves at the same time. The inference of this is that our approach to organising facilities for others to learn will be influenced by how far their learning capacity has developed. There are five stages:

- 1 *The novice* learns facts and rules without criticism or discussion, accepting that there are ways of doing things that others have devised, and that's that.
- 2 *The advanced beginner* goes a little further by being able to incorporate the lessons of experience, so that understanding begins to expand and embellish the basic facts and rules. As you begin to experience working in an organisation, aspects of cultural norms become apparent that are just as important as the basic rules. You find out the subtleties of the dress code and working relationships and extend competence by trying out very slight departures from the rigidity of the rules.
- 3 *Competency* represents a further development of confidence and a reduced reliance on absolute rules by recognising a wider variety of cues from the working context. There is a greater degree of learning by trial and error, experimenting with new behaviours. It is not abandoning the rules, but being able to use them more imaginatively and with an interpretation that suits one's own personal strengths and inclinations.
- 4 *Proficiency* is where the learner transcends analysis and begins to use intuition:

Calculation and rational analysis seem to disappear. The unconscious, fluid, and effortless performance begins to emerge, and no one plan is held sacred. You learn to unconsciously 'read' the evolving situation. You notice cues and respond to new cues as the importance of the old ones recedes. (Quinn *et al.* 1990, p. 315)

- 5 *Expert* is the term used to describe those rare people who produce a masterly performance simply by doing what comes naturally, because all the learning has fused together to develop a capacity based on having in their heads 'multidimensional maps of the territory' that are unknown to other people; they are thus able to meet effortlessly the contradictions of organisational life.

This is a neat and helpful model, although it could also be an excuse for sloppy thinking and an inability to see that there has been a sea change that undermines the expert's certainties. HR students have ground into them the risks of snap judgements in selection interviewing ('I can tell as soon as they come through the door') and there will always be a temptation for established managers to take short cuts on the

basis of their assumed expertise without realising that the rules have been changed and they are now playing the wrong game.

WINDOW ON PRACTICE

David teaches a teacher-training course which has a mixture of students. Most are recent graduates with little working experience but well-developed study skills. A minority are a little older, usually mothers with growing children, who have experience, but whose study skills are rusty. He finds that the mature students tend to dominate discussion at the beginning of the course, as they constantly relate everything to their own experience and circumstances, while the recent graduates feel at a loss and put down. After a few weeks the younger students become more assertive in discussion as they gain confidence from their developing understanding, and the mature students are less dominant because they are beginning to question some of the taken-for-granted certainty of their earlier opinions. Mutual respect gradually develops and both groups learn from each other. David classifies the recent graduates as novices rapidly becoming advanced beginners and the mature students as competents who have to revert to being novices in order to move on to proficiency.

Job instruction

The first step in learning a skill is for the learner to understand the task and what needs to be done to produce a satisfactory performance. This provides the initial framework for, and explanation of, the actions that are to be developed later, although more information will be added to the framework as the training proceeds. The job of the teacher at this point is to decide how much understanding is needed to set up the training routine, especially if part methods are to be used for the later practice. Trainees are usually keen to get started with 'hands-on' experience, so long and detailed preliminaries are best avoided.

The second step is to practise the performance, so the instructor has to decide how to divide the task up into separate units or subroutines to aid learning. Typists begin their training by learning subroutines for each hand before combining them into routines for both hands together, but pianists spend very short periods of practice with one hand only. The reason for this seems to be that typists use their two hands in ways that are relatively independent of each other with the left always typing 'a' and the right always typing 'p', so that coordination of the hands is needed only to sequence the actions. In playing the piano there is a more complex integration of the actions performed by the two hands so that separate practice can impair rather than enhance later performance. A further aspect of learning to type is to practise short letter sequences that occur frequently, such as 'and', 'or', 'the', 'ing' and 'ion'. These can then be incorporated into the steadily increasing speed of the typist as the actions become automatic and reliable. The amateur typist will often transpose letters or hit the wrong key, writing 'trasnpose' instead of 'transpose' or 'hte' instead of 'the'. The skilled typist will rarely do this because the effect of the

repeated drills during training will have made the subroutines not only automatic but also correct.

The third element is feedback, so that learners can compare their own performance with the required standard and see the progress they are making. The characteristics of good feedback are immediacy and accuracy. If the feedback comes immediately after the action, the trainee has the best chance of associating error with the part of the performance that caused it, whereas delayed feedback will demonstrate what was wrong, but the memory of what happened will have faded. If you are being taught to drive a car, one of the early lessons is changing gear. If you think you understand what the instructor tells you, you need to try it out straightaway, so that you have first the feedback of your own performance in seeing if you execute the manoeuvre effectively and then the feedback from the instructor, who confirms that you have done it right, but may add some ways to do it even better. If you are learning photography you do not have that element of immediate feedback, so that you have to recall everything that took place in taking the photograph when you eventually receive the prints.

The second characteristic of feedback is that it should be as accurate as possible in the information it provides on the result and the performance. The driving instructor may say, 'That's fine', or may say, 'That was better than last time because you found the gear you were looking for, but you are still snatching. Try again and remember to ease it in.' The second comment provides a general indication of making progress, it provides an assessment of the performance and specific comment that should improve the next attempt.

The job instruction sequence

Preparation

The instructor will have two sets of objectives: organisational and behavioural. Organisational objectives specify the contribution to the business that the learner will make at the end of training. It will be general but necessary. If a company trains its own word processor operators and secretaries, for instance, it might be that the organisational objectives will be to teach people to word process and to transcribe from handwritten copy or dictating machine, but not to take shorthand. These are different from educational objectives, which focus on the trainee or student rather than on organisational needs, so that tutors in secretarial colleges are more likely to arrange training round what will be useful in a number of occupational openings. The instructor will need to work out organisational objectives which may or may not include broader educational features.

Behavioural objectives are specifically what the learner should be able to do when the training, or training phase, is complete. Organisational objectives for trainee word processor operators may be simply to ensure a constant supply of people able to type accurately and at reasonable speed. In behavioural terms that would be made more specific by setting standards for numbers of words to be typed to a predetermined level of accuracy per minute.

ACTIVITY IV.2

Think of a training experience involving learning how to *do* something that you are contemplating for yourself or for someone else in your organisation. Note down organisational objectives and behavioural objectives for the training.



Next the instructor will decide what learning methods to use. We have already seen that the main elements of job instruction are understanding, practice and feedback, so the instructor decides how much initial explanation is needed, and how many other explanations will be needed at different stages of the training, together with the form that is appropriate. Words alone may be enough, but audio-visual illustration and demonstration will probably be needed as well. For some skills computer-based training and interactive video can provide frequent explanations and feedback on trainee performance.

Two questions about practice are to decide on the subroutines and any necessary simulation, such as the working of a flight simulator in pilot training. Most feedback is by the instructor talking to the learner, but it may be necessary to provide greater accuracy or speed to the feedback by methods such as television recording or photography. The most common method of job instruction is the *progressive part* method. This had its most comprehensive explanation by Douglas Seymour (1966). The task to be undertaken by the learner is broken down into a series of subroutines. The learner then practises routine 1, routine 2 and then 1 1 2.

The next step is to practise routine 3, then 2 1 3 and 1 1 2 1 3, so that competence is built up progressively by practising a subroutine and then attaching it to the full task, which is constantly being practised with an increasing number of the different components included. The components are only practised separately for short periods before being assimilated, so there is no risk of fragmentary performance.

This only works if the job can be subdivided into components. Where this is not possible, *simplification* offers an alternative. In this method the task to be performed is kept as a whole, but reduced to its simplest form. Skilled performance is then reached by gradually increasing the complexity of the exercises. In cookery the learner begins with simple recipes and gradually develops a wider repertoire.

There are some specialised methods of memory training which can be listed here, as well as ways of training for acquiring perceptual skills. Both types of ability appear to be increasing in importance in organisational life.

The most familiar way of memorising is the *mnemonic* or *jingle*, wherein a simple formula provides the clue to a more comprehensive set of data. 'Laser' is much easier to remember than 'light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation'. If the initial letters are not easily memorable, the mnemonic is replaced by the jingle. The denseness of 'ROYGBIV' has led generations of schoolchildren to remember 'Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain' as a way of recalling the sequence of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet in the spectrum. 'Arthur Spits in Claude's Milk' is a rather less familiar way of remembering that there are five types of arthropod: Arthropods, Spiders, Insects, Crustaceans and Myriapods. One does have to be sure, however, both that the mnemonic or jingle will itself be remembered and that it will subsequently be possible to remember what is to be recalled.

ACTIVITY IV.3

What do the following sets of letters mean:

DERV, DfES, DSS, RADAR, TINA LEA, UNESCO, FCIPD?

Apart from the obvious, why should anyone remember the phrase, 'Most Engineers Prefer Blondes'?



For some tasks the use of *rules* reduces the volume of material to be memorised. There are many fault-finding rules, for instance, where the repairer is taught to use a systematic series of rules. The stranded motorist who telephones the vehicle rescue service for assistance will probably be asked a first question, 'Have you run out of petrol?' The answer 'Yes' identifies the fault, while 'No' leads to the second question, 'Is there any spark?' so that the engineer who comes to help already has some areas of fault eliminated.

Deduction is a method that puts information into categories so that if something does not fit into one category the learner then uses deduction to conclude that it must belong in another. At the beginning of this Focus on skills was the example of the office messenger remembering that invoices go to Mr Brown and cheques to Mrs Smith. If there was also a Ms Robinson, who received all sales enquiries, complaints, unsolicited sales promotion material, tax returns, questionnaires, applications for employment and so on, the messenger would not need to remember what did go to Ms Robinson, but what did not: invoices to Mr Brown, cheques to Mrs Smith and everything else to Ms Robinson. Some interesting examples of using deduction in training are to be found in Belbin and Downs (1966).

For memorisation of information the *cumulative part* method is slightly, but significantly, different from the progressive part method already described in that the learner constantly practises the whole task, with each practice session adding an extra component. This is distinct from the progressive part method in which components are practised separately before being built into the whole. This can be especially useful if the more difficult material is covered first, as it will then be rehearsed much more than that coming later.

A method for the development of perceptual skills is *discrimination*, which requires the learner to distinguish between items that appear similar to the untrained eye or ear. In a rough-and-ready way it is the procedure followed by the birdwatcher or the connoisseur of wine. First the trainee compares two items which are clearly dissimilar and identifies the points of difference. Then other pairs are produced to be compared, with the differences gradually becoming less obvious. Discrimination can be aided by *cueing*, which helps the learner to identify particular features in the early attempts at discrimination by providing arrows or coloured sections. Some people start learning to type with the keys coloured according to whether they should be struck with the left or right hand, or even according to the particular finger which is appropriate. Gradually the cues are phased out as the learner acquires the competence to identify without them.

Magnification is a way of developing the capacity to distinguish small faults in a process or even small components in machinery. Material for examination is magnified at the beginning of training and then reduced back to normal as competence is acquired. Inspectors of tufted carpet start their training by being shown samples of poor tufting that have been produced using much larger material than normal. Later they examine normal material under a magnifying glass and eventually they are able to examine the normal product. A helpful discussion of the magnification method can be found in Holding (1965).

The various training methods to be used are put together in a training programme. This sets out both what the instructor is going to do and the progress the trainee is expected to make. Of critical importance here is pacing; how much material has to be taken in before practice begins, how long the practice period is before the learner is able to proceed to a new part, and how frequently progress is checked by the teacher. Individual trainees will each have their own rate at which they can proceed and will need differing levels of initial explanation and demonstration before practice can start. Training programmes require sufficient flexibility to accommodate the varying capacities that learners bring to their training.

A useful feature of the training programme is providing scope for learners to be involved in determining their own rate of progress and some self-discovery, to avoid spoon-feeding. At the outset trainees are so conscious of their dependency that all measures that build up confidence, independence and autonomy are welcome.

The instruction

When instructor and trainee meet for the first time there is a mutual appraisal. The process is basically ‘getting to know you’, but the exchanges are important, as the two people have to work together and the learner will be uncertain in an unfamiliar situation, and absolutely dependent upon the instructor. It is essential that learners feel confident in the instructor as someone skilled in the task that is to be learned and enthusiastic about teaching it to others. They will also be looking for reassurance about their own chances of success by seeking information about previous trainees.

The explanation of procedure will follow as soon as the meeting phase has lasted long enough. Here is the first feature of pacing that was mentioned as part of preparation. There has to be enough time for meeting to do its work, but long, drawn-out introductions lead to impatience and wanting to get started.

The procedure is the programme, with the associated details of timing, rate of progress, training methods and the general overview of what is to happen. The most important point to the trainee is obviously the end. When does one ‘graduate’? What happens then? Can it be quicker? Do many people fail? What happens to them? The instructor is, of course, more interested in the beginning of the programme rather than the end, but it is only with a clear grasp of the end that the trainee can concentrate on the beginning. Clarifying the goal reinforces the commitment to learning.

With long-running training programmes where an array of skills has to be mastered, the point of graduation may be too distant to provide an effective goal so that the tutor establishes intermediate goals: ‘By Friday you will be able to . . .’ This phase benefits from illustration: a timetable, a chart of the average learning curve, samples of work by previous trainees; all make more tangible the prospect of success and more complete the mental picture of the operating framework that the

learner is putting together. It is also helpful to ensure that the explanation does not become mechanical, like the tourist guide at a stately home. If the instructor has explained the procedure so often that it has become automatic, it is no longer the vivid stimulus to learning that is so necessary. It is a time for as much interchange as possible, with questions, reiteration, further explanation, clarification and confirmation.

WINDOW ON PRACTICE

Repetition does not necessarily make material automatic. Acker Bilk played 'Stranger on the Shore' thousands of times, and many excellent teachers reuse exactly the same material repeatedly. The Scottish playwright James Barrie studied medicine in his youth and took with him to university a set of verbatim anatomy notes that had been compiled by his father thirty years earlier. His father said the lectures were so interesting that it would be better if he did not have to make notes. As Barrie attended the lectures, he was astonished to find that little had changed. At one point the lecturer took hold of a gas bracket and related an anecdote. On looking at his father's notes he saw, 'At this point Professor X took hold of a gas bracket and told this story . . .'

The task that the trainee has to perform is first demonstrated and explained. The purpose is not to display the teacher's advanced skills, but to provide a basis for the learner's first, tentative (and possibly incorrect) attempts. The demonstration is thus done without any flourishes, and as slowly as possible, because the teacher is not only demonstrating skill but also using skill to convince the trainees that they can do the job. Accompanying the demonstration, an explanation gives reasons for the different actions being used and describing what is being done so that the learners can watch analytically. Their attention is drawn to features they might overlook, the sequence of actions is recounted and key points are mentioned.

The task must be presented to the learner in its simplest possible form, with a straightforward, unfussy, accurate demonstration accompanied by an explanation which emphasises correct sequence, reasons why, features that might be overlooked in the demonstration and the key points that lead to success. Where possible, the tutor should not mention what not to do. Errors can be dealt with later; at this stage the direction should be on what to do.

The presentation is followed, and perhaps interrupted, by questions from the learners on what they did not follow or cannot remember. The success of this stage will depend on the skill of the instructor in going through the opening stages of the encounter. Many trainees are reluctant to question because they feel that the question reveals their ignorance, which will be judged as stupidity. The experienced instructor can stimulate the questioning and confirming by the trainees by putting questions to them. This is effective only when done well, as there is the obvious risk of inhibiting people by confronting them with their lack of understanding. The most unfortunate type of questions are those which cross-examine:

'Now, tell me the three main functions of this apparatus.'
'Can anyone remember which switch we press first?'

Little better are the vague requests for assent:

'Do you understand?'
'Am I making myself clear?'
'Is that all right, everybody?'

These are leading questions. They will be some use as there will be nods and grunts from the trainees to provide response, but it is most unlikely that people will do more than offer the easy, regular 'yes'. The job of the teacher is to help learners build the picture in their own minds without feeling that they are being tested. This will only come with good rapport. After the presentation the trainees have their first attempt at the task.

They expect to do badly and need confidence from the tutor, who has to steer a difficult path between too much or too little intervention. Too much and the trainees do not 'feel their feet' and acquire the confidence that comes from sensing the strength and purpose of their own first faltering steps. Too little intervention means that trainees learn about their lack of competence, which is reinforced by a performance that falls short of what the presentation had suggested as being possible. This shows the importance again of presentation, which has to be pitched at the level that will make initial performance feasible, without building up expectations that cannot be realised.

Among the considerations for teachers are the varying potential of individual trainees and the ritual elements of training. Some trainees will be able to make initial progress much more rapidly than others, so that pegging all to the same rate of advance will inhibit both. The ritual features depend on the trainee acknowledging the absolute, albeit temporary, superiority of the tutor. It has already been pointed out that there is a reluctance to question during presentation; there are also intermittent displays of deference to the teacher. This enables learners to perform badly during practice without losing face. However, deference to a superior figure is normally offered on the assumption that the novice is being helped towards the advanced level of skill that the superior possesses. If early practice of a taught skill produces abject performances by the learners, then they either lose confidence or resent the instructor for highlighting their inadequacy.

Learning theory tells us the importance of the law of effect, which practice makes possible, but it also tells us that there is likely to be a point at which the learner makes a sudden leap forward; the point at which the penny drops and there is a shared excitement. In the words of Professor Higgins about Eliza: 'I think she's got it. By Jove, she's got it.' Practice leads up to the point where the learning spurts forward and it then provides the reinforcement of that learning by continued rehearsal and confirmation.

The most effective reinforcement for learners is realising that they can perform, like the child who at last finds it possible to remain upright and mobile on a bicycle.

Learners cannot usually rely on their own interpretation of success: they will need constant assessment by the teacher. Many of the textbooks on teaching and learning emphasise the value of praise, a little of which apparently goes a long way, for example:

When they are learning people need to know where they stand, they need to know how they are progressing. The knowledge of their progress spurs them on to greater achievements. In this respect praise is always far more helpful than criticism.
(Winfield 1979)

Effective reinforcement enables trainees to understand both the result and the actions or behaviour that produced the result, so the tutor needs to identify the particular ways in which progress is being made and explain their merit, as well as explaining what caused the progress to happen. When trainees are approaching full competence, with the associated self-confidence, then they are able to cope with more direct criticism.

Presentation

The material above is directed mainly at instruction for the R and M of CRAMP: reflex skills and memorisation. Presentation is directed towards the C: comprehension. Much training takes this form, as people simply have to be told about things. Induction is partly experiential, in that a person is shown round and given a workspace and so forth, but much of it simply has to be known and understood. In the last ten years there has been a plethora of guides and self-help books on how to make an effective presentation. HR people constantly have to present on such matters as explaining a change of policy, clarifying details of a new trade union agreement or setting out the implications in a change of employment legislation. There may be presentations on career prospects in the organisation at careers conventions, pitching to a senior management group for an improvement in the budget, 'selling' the advantages of a new performance-related pay scheme, or explaining to a small group of job applicants the details of the post for which they have applied.

Objectives

As with almost every aspect of management, the starting point is the objective. What are you aiming to achieve? What do you want the listeners to do, to think or to feel? Note that the question is not 'What do you want to say?' The objective is in the response of the listeners. That starting point begins the whole process with a focus on results and payoff, turning attention away from ego. It also determines tone. If your objective is to inform, you will emphasise facts. If you aim to persuade, you will try to appeal to emotion as well as to reason.

The material

What is to be said or, more accurately, what should members of the audience go away having understood and remembered?

Organise your material with an introduction that previews, a body that develops, and a conclusion that reviews. When you organize the body of your presentation, start by sorting out the theme. The theme is a planning device that holds together the various ideas you want to discuss. If the theme of your presentation is informative, then the body should provide facts. If the theme is persuasive, the body should develop persuasive arguments. (Fandt 1994, p. 159)

In the introduction the speaker establishes rapport with the audience. Apart from gaining their attention, the speaker will include here an answer to the unspoken question: is it going to be worth our while listening? Is this person worth listening to? The person who is worth listening to is someone who looks at the audience and looks friendly, knowledgeable and, above all, enthusiastic. A useful format for the introduction is to explain what the members of the audience will know or be able to do at the end. It is also helpful to sketch out the framework of what is to come, so that people can follow it more readily. But stick to what you promise. If you say there are going to be five points, the audience will listen for five to make sure that they have not missed one.

Having secured the attention of the listeners, you now have them waiting not just for what you say next, but with a framework in their heads of what they will hear, so they will be able to locate their understanding within that framework. The main body of the presentation is the message that is to be conveyed, the development of the argument and the build-up of what it is that the audience should go away having understood and remembered.

The main body will need to be effectively organised. This will not only help members of the audience to maintain attention, but also discipline the speaker to avoid rambling, distracting irrelevance or forgetting. The most common methods are:

- *Chronological sequence*, dealing with issues by taking the audience through a series of events. A presentation to an employment tribunal often follows this pattern.
- *Known to unknown, or simple to complex*. The speaker starts with a brief review of what the audience already knows or can easily understand and then develops to what they do not yet know or cannot yet understand. The logic of this method is to ground the audience in something they can handle so that they can make sense of the unfamiliar. This is the standard method of organising teaching sessions.
- *Problem to solution* is almost the exact opposite of simple to complex. A problem is presented and a solution follows. The understanding of the audience is again grounded, but this time grounded in anxiety that the speaker is about to relieve.
- *Comparison* is a method of organisation which compares one account with another. Selling usually follows this path, as the new is compared with the old.

Whatever the method of organisation for the material, the main body will always contain a number of key thoughts or ideas. This is what the speaker is trying to plant in the minds of the audience: not just facts, which are inert, but the ideas which facts may well illustrate and clarify. The idea that inflation is dangerously high is only illustrated by the fact that it is at a particular figure in a particular month.

The ideas in a presentation can be helpfully linked together by a device that will help audience members to remember them and to grasp their interdependence. One method is to enshrine the ideas in a story. If the story is recalled, the thoughts are

recalled with it, as they are integral to the structure. The classic examples of this are the New Testament parables, but every play, novel or film uses the same method. Another method is to use key words to identify the points that are being made, especially if they have an alliterative or mnemonic feature, such as 'People Produce Prosperity'. In a lecture it is common to provide a framework for ideas by using a drawing or system model to show the interconnection of points.

Facts, by giving impact, keep together the framework of ideas that the speaker has assembled. They clarify and give dimension to what is being said. The danger is to use too many, so that the audience are overwhelmed by facts and figures which begin to bemuse them. If the presentation is to be accompanied by a hand-out, facts may be usefully contained in that, so that they can be referred to later, without the audience having to remember them.

Humour is the most dangerous of all aids to the speaker. If the audience laughs at a funny story, the speaker will be encouraged and may feel under less tension, but how tempting to try again and end up 'playing for laughs'. Laughter is a most seductive human reaction, but too many laughs are even more dangerous than too many facts. What will the audience remember, the joke, or what the joke was intended to illustrate? Attempted humour is also dangerous for the ineffective comedian. If you tell what you think is a funny story and no one laughs, you have made a fool of yourself (at least in your own eyes) and risk floundering.

Very few people speak effectively without notes. Although there is a tendency to marvel at those who can, relying solely on memory risks missing something out, getting a fact wrong or drying up completely. Notes follow the pattern of organisation you have established, providing discipline and limiting the tendency to ramble. It is both irritating and unhelpful for members of an audience to cope with a speaker who wanders off down a blind alley, yet this is very common. When an amusing anecdote pops up in your brain, it can be almost irresistible to share it.

There are two basic kinds of notes: headlines or a script. Headlines are probably the most common, with main points underlined and facts listed beneath. Sometimes there will also be a marginal note about an anecdote or other type of illustration. The alternative, the script, enables the speaker to try out the exact wording, phrases and pauses to achieve the greatest effect. The script will benefit from some marking or arrangement that will help you to find your place again as your eyes constantly flick from the page to the audience and back again. This can be underlining or using a highlighter. When using a script it is important not to make the reading too obvious. Head down, with no eye contact and little light and shade is a sure-fire way of turning off the attention of the audience. Public figures increasingly use electronic prompters which project the script progressively through the presentation on to a glass screen some way in front of the speaker. By this means the script can be spoken with little break in eye contact with the audience. This will be too ambitious for most HR people, but the important thing is that the words should be *spoken* rather than *read*.

There are many variations of these basic methods of organising the material, so that one approach is to use varying line length, while another is to use rows of dots to indicate pause or emphasis.

Some people like to have their notes on small cards, so that they are unobtrusive, but this is difficult if the notes are more than headlines. Standard A4 paper should present no problem, if the notes are not stapled, are well laid out and can be handled discreetly. Never forget to number the pages or cards, as the next time you speak they may slip off your lap moments before you are due to begin.

Most presentations benefit from using visual aids. You may use a model, a sample or even a person ('Here is our trainee of the month'), but mostly you will use visual images. Blackboards still exist and white boards are fairly common. Flip charts and overhead projector acetates are widely used. The most rapidly growing type of visual image in presentation is that from a computer, projected on a screen, usually using a PowerPoint package.

The rationale for visual aids is that we remember what we see for longer than we remember what we are told, and we can sometimes understand what we see better than we can understand what we hear. Overhead projectors and other devices are, however, aids to, and not substitutes for, the presentation. Too much displayed material can obscure rather than illuminate what is being said. Television news provides a good example of how much can be used. The dominant theme is always the talking head with frequently intercut pieces of film. Very seldom do words appear on the screen and then usually as extracts from a speech or report, where a short sentence or passage is regarded as being especially meaningful. The other way in which words and numbers appear is when facts are needed to illustrate an idea, so that ideas such as football scores or a change in the value of the pound sterling almost always have the figures shown on the screen to clarify and illustrate. Seldom, however, will more than two or three numbers be displayed at the same time. Speakers need to remember the size of what they are displaying as well as its complexity. Material has to be big enough for people to read and simple enough for them to follow. Material also has to be timed to coincide with what is being said.

A note of caution about PowerPoint is that it can be a most seductive toy for the presenter. The box of tricks is enormous and too many people give a show, with clever figures dancing across the screen and other distractions. We must always remember what the purpose of the presentation is; clever or spectacular forms of display can become what people remember rather than the message that is to be conveyed. Television news is again an illustration. Between programmes there may be all manner of clever visual entertainment in brief clips. Once the news report begins there are no such fancy tricks.

SUMMARY PROPOSITIONS

- IV.1 A useful classification of types of learning is CRAMP: comprehension, reflex learning, attitude development, memory training, procedural learning.
- IV.2 Selecting the right approach to learning is helped by identifying the learner as being at one of these stages: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient or expert.
- IV.3 Alternative methods in job instruction are: progressive part, simplification, mnemonics or jingles, rules, deduction, cumulative part, discrimination and magnification.

GENERAL DISCUSSION TOPICS

- 1 There is an old saying, 'You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink'. How true is this of training and development and what are the HR implications?
- 2 Another saying is, 'What I hear I forget, what I see I can understand and what I do I know'. The relevance of that to job instruction is easy when considering manual skills, but what are the implications for aspects of training and development dealing with values and attitudes such as, for example, racist or sexist behaviour?

FURTHER READING

Belbin, E. and Belbin, R.M. (1972) *Problems in Adult Retraining*. London: Heinemann

Belbin, E. and Downs, S. (1966) 'Teaching and paired associates', *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, Vol. 40, pp. 67–74

Seymour, W.D. (1966) *Industrial Skills*. London: Pitman

Winfield, I. (1979) *Learning to Teach Practical Skills*. London: Kogan Page

Methods of teaching practical skills are so well established that most of the texts were published some time ago. Although 40 years 'old', Seymour (1966) (above) is the most thorough and practical. It can still be found in some libraries. The other works listed are slightly more recent and more widely available.

Fandt, P.M. (1994) *Management Skills: Practice and Experience*. St Paul, Minn.: West Publishing

Quinn, R.E. (1988) *Beyond Rational Management: Mastering the paradoxes and competing demands of high performance*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Quinn, R.E., Faerman, S.R., Thompson, M.P. and McGrath, M.R. (1990) *Becoming a Master Manager*. New York: John Wiley

Material on management skills is everywhere, but in this context the above works are especially helpful.

Yate, M. and Sander, P. (2003) *The Ultimate Business Presentations Book*. London: Kogan Page

Presentation is also preached very widely. This excellent recent import from the United States covers the ground very thoroughly and readably.



WEB LINKS

On the book's website there is supplementary material on handling group discussion as a form of learning. This is the usual method for social skills training and attitude development. Other useful websites are:

www.lsc.gov.uk (Learning and Skills Council).

www.mmu.ac.uk/academic/studserv/learningsupport/studyskills/presentations (Manchester Metropolitan University).

www.spokenwordltd.com/coaching (Spoken Word Ltd, providing teaching and coaching in spoken word skills).

www.ft.com (this has a useful section 'Career Point', but you need to pay to subscribe).

www.ssda.org.uk (Sector Skills Development Agency).

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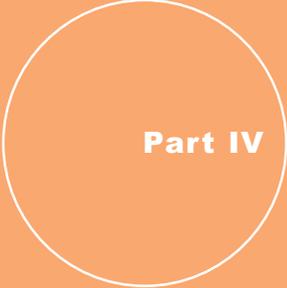
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- Quinn, R.E. (1988) *Beyond Rational Management: Mastering the paradoxes and competing demands of high performance*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Quinn, R.E., Faerman, S.R., Thompson, M.P. and McGrath, M.R. (1990) *Becoming a Master Manager*. New York: John Wiley.
- Seymour, W.D. (1966) *Industrial Skills*. London: Pitman.
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REVIEW OF PART IV

It is a long time since Lord Weinstock, as Chairman of GEC, asked all his senior managers to tell him how they were going to save money, starting with management development. He can perhaps be forgiven for his shortsightedness as he was an accountant, and HR people tend to view the world differently from accountants. The thinking behind his request, however, lies in the difficulty that training and development so often face: does it work; is it worth the money? At the time of Lord Weinstock's comment a Director of Training in a different multinational business explained to one of the authors how his objective was to establish in the organisation 'a learning community within, but separate from, grim commercial pressures of the bottom line'. There is always the lurking suspicion that training is an escape from real life into a realm of chat and putting the world to rights. We all know that that is a total misrepresentation, but the suspicions remain. Another problem is the question of who should pay for it. Governments typically want employers to pay for training, while employers expect governments to pay for it, especially if those being trained at great expense are not going to remain for long with their current employer.

In Part IV we have considered the strategic questions in development and the ways in which we can understand how people learn and how they develop. The more specific chapters have dealt first with competence, a word that has taken on new potency in the last twenty years by concentrating on particular things that a person can do, and this is a far cry from chat and putting the world to rights at a training centre in a converted stately home somewhere. Second, we consider the development of careers and the way in which individuals take control of their own destiny within the constraints imposed, but using the benefits provided, by their employer.



Part IV CASE STUDY PROBLEM

Micropower is a rapidly growing computer software firm, specialising in tailor-made solutions for business. Increasingly, training for other businesses in their own and other software packages has occupied the time of the consultants. This it sees as a profitable route for the future and such training is now actively sold to clients. Consultants both sell and carry out the training. As an interim measure, to cope with increasing demand, the firm is now recruiting some specialist trainers, but the selling of the training is considered to be an integral part of the consultant's role.

Micropower has just issued a mission statement which accentuates 'the supply of and support for sophisticated computer solutions', based on a real understanding of business needs. The firm considers that it needs to be flexible in achieving this and has decided that multiskilling is the way forward.

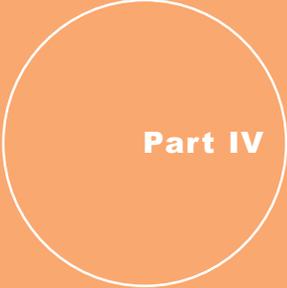
All consultants need to sell solutions and training at all levels, and be excellent analysts, designers and trainers. Some 200 consultants are now employed; most have a degree in IT and most joined the firm initially because of their wish to specialise in the technical aspects of software development, and they spent some years almost entirely in an office-based position before moving into a customer contact role. A smaller proportion were keen to concentrate on systems analysis, and were involved in customer contact from the start.

In addition there are 300 software designers and programmers who are primarily office based and rarely have any customer contact. It is from this group that new consultants are appointed. Programmers are promoted to two levels of designer and those in the top level of designer may then, if their performance level is high enough, be promoted to consultant. There is some discontent among designers that promotion means having to move into a customer contact role, and there are a growing number who seek more challenge, higher pay and status, but who wish to avoid customer contact. Another repercussion of the promotion framework is that around a quarter of the current consultants are not happy in their role. They are consultants because they valued promotion more than doing work that they enjoyed. Some have found the intense customer contact very stressful, feel they lack the appropriate skills, are not particularly comfortable with their training role and are unhappy about the increasing need to 'sell'.

Required

- 1 What immediate steps could Micropower take to help the consultants, particularly those who feel very unhappy, perform well and feel more comfortable in their new roles?
- 2 In the longer term how can Micropower reconcile its declared aim of multiskilling with a career structure which meets both organisational and employee needs?

- 3** What other aspects of human resource strategy would support and integrate with the development strategy of multiskilling?
- 4** Micropower wishes to develop a competency profile for the consultant role. How would you recommend that the firm progress this, and how might the profile be used in the widest possible manner in the organisation?



Part IV EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

- 1** Outline the nature and purpose of National Vocational Qualifications. What has been their impact so far?
- 2** Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of on-the-job training and development compared with off-job training and development. In which circumstances might each be more appropriate?
- 3** Identify the factors which determine 'skill need' in an organisation. Discuss how managers ensure that workers develop the skills and knowledge necessary for their roles within organisations.
- 4** What practical steps would you take if you were the human resource manager in an organisation wanting to introduce training for people to enable them to manage their own careers more effectively?
- 5** What is a career, how is it changing and how should it be managed?
- 6** Choose one of the following: (a) career planning workshops; (b) mentoring; (c) succession planning. Define it and briefly describe the forms it can take in an organisation. Discuss the criteria on which its success can be evaluated and consider whether some criteria are (i) more appropriate, and (ii) more easily measured, than others.
- 7** Explain to a line manager the value of coaching as a way of developing a subordinate.
- 8** 'Employment development should be handed over to line managers.' Summarise your views on this statement.