

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Role of a management consultant in training and development

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Simply stated, TRAINING enables a person to do his present job well and DEVELOPING enables a person to prepare himself for taking broader and higher responsibilities. In terms of EFFECTIVENESS training is important at every level; so is development in terms of GROWTH. If it is important at every level, it is of critical importance at MANAGERIAL LEVELS.

The economics of training and development

Says Dr. Peter Drucker :

"Performing capabilities of people are latent and potential until transformed into usable competence through training and development. Rate of financial capital formation is vital; but human capital formation is a precondition to continued success. The reliable road to economic development is through human capital formation. Nations are not rich or poor per se, but are so because of developed or undeveloped manpower."

It is good investment to develop people into a performing manpower. Training and development expenditures are managed as well as manageable expenditures; they are often deferred and invariably inadequate due to complacency. A definite budgetary appropriation is a positive way of expressing one's desire to train and develop personnel; wishing won't, but doing will. It is not a question of affording the costs of training, but one of the costs of not affording such expenditures.

The best training and development effort is not synonymous with the costliest. Training and de-

velopment efforts do not directly pay off, but they add a new dimension to economic progress. One cannot expect too much too quickly from training and development, but too little and too late an effort will not produce any results.

Commenting on the above, Dr. H. N. Nanjundiah adds :

"The performing capabilities of people in any organisation are only latent and potential capabilities. They would remain as such unless they are transformed into usable competence through 'training and development'. Such a transformation is needed in every individual if sustained organisational performance should become a reality. Whereas the rate of capital formation through profits and saving is vital to future growth, the continued well-being of every enterprise is preconditioned by the rate of performing manpower formation or the rate of human capital formation. More often than not, shortages of financial capital may even be partially compensated by raising the value of the human capital through training and development as a means of generating new financial capital. One has to go to the USA to see this nation applied massively in practice in every walk of American life. The reliable road to economic development is beyond doubt through human capital development. Nations differ in their position of the scale of economic development because of their differential perception and fulfilment of the need for the development of a performing manpower. In turn, undeveloped manpower is both the cause and effect of undeveloped concepts and administrative practice

in manpower training and development. It is, therefore, good economics to devote the necessary attention, time and resources to develop available manpower to begin with."

In any given enterprise, however, the expenditures incurred on training and development are managed expenditures in that they are incurred at the pleasure and discretion of management. They are also the most manageable of all expenditures in that their incidence can be varied as opposed to the expenditures on materials or machinery and equipment which are fixed. Being intangible in nature and lacking immediacy, they are often deferred and almost always inadequate. And yet, merely wishing or talking about training and development does not and will not produce the desired results, but doing will. Yearly budgetary appropriations of a definite amount are essential if it should not remain wishful thinking. It is not so much a question of affording such expenditures as it is one of the costs or losses of not affording them at the right time.

Training and development activity per se is not costly. It costs as such as one wants to do at a time. The important thing is that a beginning should be made and something done in this direction even if it is in a small way. The best training and development effort is not synonymous with the costliest. Even a nominal one per cent of the payroll appropriated and properly utilised on training and development activities would go a long way to ensure the better utilisation of the remaining 99%. Training and development activities per se do not also pay off directly, but they add a new dimension to performance effectiveness and progress. It is not prudent on the part of management to expect too much too quickly, and yet the long term effects of too little and too late an effort at training and development would undoubtedly lead to poor organisational performance.

A management consultant

A management consultant is by tradition — though the tradition is not long — one who

- a. holds a degree in one or other discipline (in proof of having acquired the ability to absorb knowledge systematically);
- b. has worked in an industrial, business or other economic organisation in responsible positions atleast for a period of 5 years;

- c. has the professional spirit, discipline, skill and values; and
- d. has preferably taken an apprenticeship with a professional management consultant.

Education is not enough; experience is not enough; and professional discipline is not enough — one needs to have ALL THE THREE to make a consultant. Apprenticeship enables one to appreciate and absorb the intangible professional spirit and values.

One aspect of the PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINE is to abide by certain self-imposed CODE OF ETHICS : 'self imposed' because, unlike in other professions, there is yet no organised body to insist on the observance of this code of ethics.

ONE OF THE CODES says: You are not to solicit business. This seems hard on an individual, especially at our stage of industrial growth. Abiding by this code, however, makes a lot of sense when we examine the function of management consultancy.

Primarily, management consultancy is AN OBJECTIVE ROLE. You can be a consultant to me just as I can be a consultant to you. For the obvious reason that I tend to be subjective, I cannot be a consultant to myself. Conceding this aspect, medical doctors — 'business doctor' is another term used for the 'management consultant' — prefer their near relations, if they are sick, to be handled by other physicians. The moment soliciting of business is permitted, objectivity tends to take a holiday; and; along with it, would go one of the primary values of management consultancy.

Training executive

Training and development activity is conducted by all the organisations, if only in an informal fashion. When we single this activity out for discussion, we are referring to training and development as a distinct activity, a structured function. While training and development is the daily function of every manager, while it is true to say that it is a Top Management primary responsibility, there should be one executive in the organisation to take the formal responsibility of co-ordinating the training and development activities. Whether he engages himself full or part time on this activity is a matter of detail.

Training executive and management consultant

Do we use a consultant at all, at what stages

do we use him, and to what extent we use him — these are matters left to the judgement of the chief executive and the training executive. In certain situations, there may be no need at all for the services of an outside consultant; we may have within our own organisation all the needed resources for training and development of our personnel. Even so, it is well to know at what stages he may be useful and in what way. Since the relationship between the operating executive to the consultant can be likened to that of the general practitioner to the specialist, it helps to know the role of the management consultant in training and development.

Training and development activity is a time-consuming activity, and a continuing activity. The brunt has to be borne by the operating executives; the outside consultant can help only in a small way.

The role of the management consultant is one of supporting and supplementing the operating executive. It is not substituting or supplanting; he is a complement and not a competitor.

How does he play his supplementary and supporting role? And at what stages?

A consultant can play a useful role at many stages of manager training and development — from the awareness stage to the evaluation stage.

The awareness stage

It is possible that Top Management is not seized with the need for **organised** training and development activity in an organisation. Competitive conditions, unusual personal leadership abilities and many other factors may make some Top Managements feel that this is a we-can-do-without activity. The training and development minded executive or executives may feel that, in terms of the conceivable future, this approach is unhelpful to the organisation. They would like their managers to keep off executive obsolescence and consciously prepare themselves for growth. The problem becomes then one of selling the idea that it is desirable that a **beginning** is made in this direction.

A consultant may be able to play a role at this stage; he may be able to strengthen the executives' hands in the larger interests of the organisation.

One company took advantage of a Dealers' Conference. To give the visitors something new, a talk by a management consultant was arranged. The topic was **Recent Trends in Management Training**.

When the Top Management listened to this

presentation, it occurred to them that it is time to make a small beginning — 'it would not hurt'.

The basic stage

Structured training and development activity is effective when all that we do is **need-based**. Ascertaining the training and developmental needs of the managerial personnel is, therefore, a basic stage. The training executive can do this job as well. If he is not particularly experienced, the consultant can play a role here in respect of methodology. In cases where the training executive is not high up in the hierarchy, the consultant may also be asked to handle part of the hierarchy.

The strategy stage

Once the needs are known, a strategy has to be developed to meet these needs. Different needs are met by different training and development approaches; one need may be met by guided reading and another by a week long skill development programme; and this point tends to get missed in some organisations. Matching methods to needs is a skilled activity. The consultant can contribute at this stage through **brief discussions**.

One company invited us to do a management training programme for them. They asked us about the number of lectures we would be giving and the topics and duration of those lectures. They added that these lectures should be spread over a year.

We learnt that the company has been sponsoring their supervisory, managerial and executive personnel to a number of management training programmes in the country for almost a decade. We also learnt that no organised effort has been made to ascertain the training and development needs of the managerial personnel who were nominated for the various programmes, not to follow-up those who did participate in the programmes. The company graciously accepted our suggestion that we ascertain the needs and take such steps as will make the executives cash in on what they have acquired so far. The work took the shape of mostly individual and small group discussion and counselling sessions; it was essentially one of slanting their available knowledge to expected contribution. There was visible rise in manager productivity within a 12 month period. The role of the consultant in this case was mostly that of a **catalyst and an enzyme** — the consultant made the managers use what they already had to still better purpose by judicious on-the-job counselling; and by developing appropriate managerial skills.

The structured programme

Structured programmes and group sessions form part of the strategy of meeting training and developmental needs. In designing these programmes the consultant can play a role. The training executive can design the draft of the programme and invite the consultant to give his **comments or second opinion**. Arising out of his experience elsewhere over a period, the consultant may be able to contribute an idea or two. Occasionally, and at the early stages of the training and development department, the consultant may be asked to do the job and the company executive seconded to him; and this may be one way of training the trainer.

One organisation invited us to have a look at a programme devised for middle management sales personnel. One item mentioned there was 'Background Reading'. The department was planning to go through a lot of literature, select material and distribute them in a duplicated form. A suggestion was made that instead they may have a book session, and each participant may sum up one book of his choice out of the 50 books kept in a special library. This was accepted. It was later found that most participants read more than one book, apart from benefiting from others reading.

Another organisation, apart from asking our comments in the design of the programme, wanted us to suggest faculty to be drawn from outside the organisation. "We know you have your preferences and we may not accept all of them. Our problem is we do not know who is good on what topic. We expect all of them to be good communicators however. One added request is that if any of them excuse themselves at the last moment, one of your associates should pitch in."

The faculty training

While the need is to convey company and job information, the internal faculty is more realistic. Occasionally, the problem arises that some of the executives are not able to get across the message to a group. They have the matter for presentation but they are not skilled in the manner of presentation. The consultant can play a useful role in developing the local faculty in the skill of platform speaking.

A **training institution** chief felt that his full time faculty would be more effective if all of them are given a comprehensive skill development course in platform speaking. He invited our specialist to do the job. He himself participated actively. The

results proved gratifying. Since the faculty are multipliers — day in and day out teaching groups of managerial personnel at many levels — the impact on the individual and the audience proved unusual.

One of the participants of a course held at this institution, who happens to be a trustee of a school, heard of this incident and promptly decided to get all the teachers of the school to be training in Effective Speaking. This led to a by-product. Some of the teachers decided to coach in turn their students in Effective Speaking and this meant the school bagging the trophies in speech competitions in the city year after year!

As part of faculty

Either because expertise is not locally available or because we want to lend colour to the programme or because we want an outside point of view or because a delicate subject has to be discussed and the outsider can discuss it without causing embarrassment; a consultant can play the role of being part of the faculty.

One company had a topic **Superior-Subordinate Relationship**. Though all the other topics were handled by the internal faculty, it was felt desirable to invite a consultant to handle this topic since otherwise appropriate insights cannot be confidently presented and discussed.

As full faculty

The consultant may be a specialist in one or other fields, and a logical role for him in that case would be that he is the full time faculty for a particular training programme.

One company invited us to do a Rapid Reading Skill Development programme. We enquired why they wish to use our services, why they should not get the necessary gadgets etc. and administer the programme themselves. Their answer was: "We may do one programme, or even ten programmes. For just this purpose, we do not wish to develop a specialist; we do not wish to make the investment. It is more reliable, less expensive to get the help of a specialist. Where personal skill is needed temporarily, our approach is to have it from a consultant."

Another company invited us to administer certain programmes. They argued: "It will take six months before we have a training officer and he starts cracking. We will certainly get one such officer. Meanwhile, let us get going. Also, let us

be frank about one point. Our senior managers would not like to be lectured to by our training officer. You may say it is not the right spirit and you may be right. The fact is we are all status conscious: **You are an outsider and you can talk to all of us on equal terms.** And we want to purpose to be served and the purpose is to get going."

Evaluation stage

This role is best played by an objective outsider and, therefore, a professional consultant. The consultant does an audit of objectives, and achievements and makes a few suggestions. The alternative would be for the training executive to meet with colleagues in other organisations and to compare notes; the same thing is done by the consultant with the difference he brings in that little extra. Also, he is able to assist the training executive get effectively across a few suggestions to Top Management.

A continuing role

Training and more so development is a continuing process. As has been repeatedly pointed out, management development is man development and man development is self-development; and this self-development is a continuing process. The consultant can play a small role in this self-development process. The right person to guide a manager is the immediate superior. The immediate superior's guidance can be supplemented by an outside consultant's counselling.

One company having tried out the method of managers guiding their next in line felt that, while they do know what to tell, they sometimes do not have the patience or the skill to tell things in a way that will get desirable response. They invited

a consultant to visit the organisation periodically when the managerial personnel can go to him and discuss their problems — particularly human problems — freely. Especially in the area of interpersonal and intrapersonal behaviour, this approach supplemented by the other structured and formal approaches, seems to contribute to harmonious working climate.

In summary

The role of a consultant in management training and development is a supporting and supplementing one. The consultant supports and supplements the training executive and thereby helps to strengthen the effectiveness of the function. We pointed out that what the consultant can give is only that little extra. The 'little extra', however, can, make all the difference in a competitive world; it can also make a difference in the big task of utilising human resources. Where to take his help and how much to take of it is a matter of judgment. **One can even be able to do away completely with the services of a consultant and when one does it, he should have a full knowledge of what a consultant's role is and what contribution he can well make.**

There is so much work to be done in this area of manager training and development that we cannot afford to allow prejudices and false prestige come in the way of utilising whatever facilities are available in the country. Management consultants provide one of the facilities.

It is true we should choose the consultants wisely, use them judiciously and get value for what we spend on them. This we will be able to do well only when we know the respective roles of the many agencies that are available for the training and development of managers.

Professor N. H. Athreya has been recently elected as the President of the Management Consultants' Association of India. He will be glad to answer such questions on management matters that will be of common interest.