ABSTRACT
                An increasing number of corporations are using some
form of experience-based outdoor training and development. Most of
these programs follow a general process that includes: (1)
introduction of the activity by the facilitator; (2) the experiential
activity (during which the facilitator is observer or safety
monitor); and (3) debriefing or feedback. Research data suggest that
individual and group behaviors change positively after participation
in such programs. It has been assumed that this positive change is
related to the skill level of the facilitator, both in "hard" skill
areas, such as equipment set-up and activity rules, and in "soft"
skill areas, such as group dynamics and debriefing. A 2-year study
examined the effects of "hard" and "soft" skills of facilitators. In
the first year, data were collected on the outcomes of 369 Department
of Defense employees who completed a 1-day experiential program
emphasizing team building. Groups trained by five different
facilitators differed significantly in attitude toward training and
in 5 of 12 behavioral variables (self-esteem, locus of control,
problem solving, group awareness, and group homogeneity). In the
second year, the same five facilitators participated in an intensive
3-day training that focused on human behavior and group interaction
skills. Compared to employees trained by these facilitators before
their "soft" skills training, employees trained afterward scored
significantly higher in group effectiveness. This paper contains 30
references. (SV)

FACILITATORS: ONE KEY FACTOR IN IMPLEMENTING SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCE-BASED TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

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Abstract

An increasing number of corporate experience-based training
and development (EBTD) programs are being implemented in both the
profit and nonprofit sectors throughout the United States, and a
host of other countries. In a survey recently published in the
Training & Development Journal, Wagner, Baldwin & Roland (1991)
found that 13% of U.S. Training Directors reported that their
organizations currently used some form of experience-based outdoor
training and development.

The qualitative and quantitative data that has been generated
to date on EBTD have indicated that individual and group behaviors
appear to change positively after subjects have participated in
these training programs. One key reason that has been given for
this positive change is the skill level of the facilitator - both
in the "hard" skill areas (e.g., equipment set-up, activity rules,
safety guidelines) as well as the "soft" skill areas (e.g., group
process, human behavior, debriefing). An assumption that the
development of facilitator competencies in soft skills will lead to
improved program outcomes has led to an increasing emphasis on an
acquisition of soft skills over the last few years. However, there
is a scarcity of empirical research to support this assumption. A
two year evaluation of a major experience-based training program
involving five in-house facilitators, 38 separate training groups,
and over 300 individual participants has allowed us to make some
empirical assessments dealing with this important issue.

An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was first completed to
determine if significant differences in key organizationally-

desired behaviors (individual and group) could be attributed to who facilitated the group's program. Results indicate that a significant amount of variance could be attributed to the facilitator.

For the first year's program (13 groups), facilitator training consisted primarily of modules in the hard skills area. Before the start of the second year's program (25 groups), the same five facilitators were given three days of extensive training in soft skills, especially with regard to group process and human behavior. A multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) was done to compare the first year's program with the second year's program. Results indicate the experiential program was significantly more effective during the second year. The findings support the importance of soft skills training for facilitators and raise the following questions:

1. Facilitator training programs are commonly 3-5 days in length; is there an ideal hard skill/soft skill ratio?

2. What are the consequences as well as ethical dilemmas when a trainer does not have a sound soft skill expertise to offer?

3. Who has the better opportunity for program success: the facilitator who began his/her EBTD training with established soft skills competencies, or the facilitator who began with hard skills competencies?

4. What about the internal validity of field studies such as this?

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FACILITATORS: ONE KEY FACTOR IN IMPLEMENTING SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCE-BASED TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Experience-based training programs are being used increasingly by business firms throughout the United States. In a recent survey of Training Directors, Wagner, Baldwin & Roland (1991) found that 13% of the organizations surveyed currently use some form of experience-based training. Brad Thompson, in Training Magazine (1991) reported that experience-based outdoor training is a $100 million industry. We believe that this number may be somewhat conservative.

In their survey of corporate training directors Wagner, Baldwin & Roland (1991) found that the users of experience-based training programs stated that "team-building" was the most common goal of their programs. While team building programs have long been a popular direction of organizational training programs (Buller, 1986), their popularity in corporate training has escalated in recent years for a number of reasons. These reasons include the increasing amount of foreign competition, the growing interdependence of jobs, and the desire of employees for more involvement in their jobs (Varney, 1989).

While team building is the most common use of experience-based training and development programs (EBTD), many professionals have focused on individual changes that an employee experiences after attending an EBTD program. Increased willingness to accept change and increased trust in peers are two common goals of EBTD programs (Galagan, 1987). Increased self-esteem and an increased ability to accept responsibility for one's actions (locus of control) have also commonly reported benefits of EBTD programs (Laabs, 1991).

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Not everyone is a believer in the benefits of EBTD programs. An intense controversy has surrounded their use by U.S. businesses. On the one hand, anecdotal testaments from participants and their supervisors attest to the effectiveness of EBTD as a team building strategy (Liebermann & Ostrow, 1989; Long 1987), while statements from upper management suggest that EBTD surpasses any other form of training in its effectiveness (Focus-Upward Bound, 1989).

On the other hand, skeptics have described EBTD programs as "corporate recreation" (Zempke, 1979). Another author suggested that ..."building outdoor party games and simulation, when the real work to be done is all around, should be grounds for managerial malpractice indictments..." (Falvey, 1988, p.16). Management consultant Peter Drucker has stated that "somebody will sue and will get the jury to give him $5 million damages for psychic pain and that's when employers will learn that this is not within their right" (Focus-Upward Bound, 1989).

Recent empirical research has consistently found that EBTD programs can be effective in improving some organizationally desired behaviors in some circumstances (Baldwin, Wagner & Roland, 1991; Wagner & Roland, in press; Wagner, Roland, Dutkiewicz & Chase, 1991; Wagner & Fahey, 1992). Thus, while initial research has begun to demonstrate the effectiveness of these programs, key questions about the process of experience-based training programs have not been answered. One of the most important of these is: "does the facilitator make a difference in the degree of EBTD program effectiveness in improving organizationally desired behaviors"?

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While there is broad consensus that "...the group trainer or facilitator plays a major role in helping group participants to obtain whatever gains have been designated as outcomes of the experience" (Kuriloff, Babad & Kline, 1988), studies have generally focussed on differences between facilitators in traditional corporate training programs, teachers in school settings, and counselors in counseling sessions. While the necessity for adequate instructor knowledge is self-evident, the relationship between the level of knowledge of the instructor and trainee performance is not altogether clear. Wlodkowski (1985) refers to a number of brilliant and respected professionals (e.g., Dewey, Maslow, Einstein) who were notoriously boring as instructors. On the other hand, source credibility has been seen as a crucial element in changing employee attitudes (Oskamp, 1977). Thus, to the extent that instructor expertise increases student perceptions of the instructor credibility, learning should increase.

In school settings, teacher warmth and expressiveness has been found to have a positive effect on both student evaluations (Marsh & Ware, 1982), and on student performance (Ware & Williams, 1975). This phenomena, known as the "Dr. Fox effect" (Abrami, Leventhal & Perry, 1982), has been found to override the effect of lecture content on student evaluations. Basow & Distenfeld (1985) found that this effect varied for male and female teachers. Students of non-expressive female teachers scored high on achievement tests, while those of non-expressive male teachers scored lowest of all on the same achievement tests.

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Gaston (1990) suggests that the quality of the working alliance between the therapist and the client may be a significant factor in determining the success of psychotherapy. Mallinckrodt & Nelson (1991) found that counselor training level had a significant impact on this working alliance. Counselors with a higher level of training achieved a significantly better working alliance with their clients than did those with lower level of training.

There is a limited amount of research regarding differences between facilitators in experience-based training has been found. Roland (1981) studied facilitator differences in three EBTD programs utilizing an observer system to record verbal and nonverbal communication between trainers and trainees. Roland (1981) commented on the differences between the three trainers as follows:

> "...this particular trainer, as compared to the other trainers, responded more often during debriefings, was less structured, included more content in the session and used more nonverbal language. The researchers field notes support these findings, especially concerning nonverbal behavior. This trainer seemed highly-skilled in asking questions nonverbally (eyebrows raised) and praising and accepting ideas nonverbally (nodding of head). These are important findings as recent research is beginning to indicate that individuals tend to pay attention more, and react more to facilitators who utilize nonverbal communications" (Cheffers, Mancini & Martinek, 1981, pp.106-161).

However, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) found no statistically significance differences between the three training groups on point to point change scores. It should be noted that

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all three trainers had similar backgrounds in terms of experience and education, and that all three had attended the same corporate train-the-trainer program.

This study appears to be an isolated attempt at investigating the issue of the impact of trainer differences on the outcomes of experience-based training programs. Without a concerted effort to examine the overall experiential process, the role the trainer plays in this process and the specific skills and knowledge that an experiential trainer needs to be effective, the entire experiential movement may be in jeopardy (Roland & Diamond, 1991).

The Experiential Process

Experience-based interventions have expanded rapidly since the days of marching a team into the wilderness. Individual programs are facilitated at conference sites and resorts; programs are facilitated on-site; and selected experiential activities are being incorporated into existing training modules (e.g., problem solving, TQM, strategic planning, team building). Although varied the interventions all appear to use the following general experiential process: (1) introduction of the activity by the facilitator (including limits, rules, and safety factors); (2) the experiential activity (the facilitator is generally only an observer, and safety monitor in this stage); and (3) debriefing or feedback. Feedback has generally been found to be the critical element in separating effective training from ineffective training (Milroy, 1982; Scott & Wood, 1989). The first two areas represent the "hard" skills of

EBTD, while the last area (feedback) is where the need for the "soft" skills is most critical.

We believe there are three critical areas of knowledge which one needs to develop to be effective in leading experience-based training programs. These areas are:

*Process of activity skills
*Knowledge of human behavior/group interactions skills
*Knowledge of the business organization

The Current Study

The goal of the current project was to determine if the trainer does make a difference, and to determine the relative importance of "hard" versus "soft" skill is these programs. While some proponents of outdoor-based experiential training have proposed that the experiential process is so powerful that the trainer simply does not make a difference in the program outcomes, we sought some empirical proof for this question. The first phase of the current study addressed this issue. We hypothesized that the facilitator would make a significant difference in the overall impact of the training program on both group and individual behaviors.

Our initial research was conducted at a Department of Defense facility, which was using a one-day experiential program, with an emphasis on team-building. A total of five facilitators trained 369 employees in this program model. The ANCOVA results comparing the changes in 12 behaviors, and attitude toward training, are shown in table 1.

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Insert table 1 about here

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Significant differences between facilitators were found for attitude toward training and 5 of the 12 behavioral variables (self-esteem, locus of control, problem solving, group awareness, and group homogeneity). The results of this initial research suggest that the facilitator does make a difference in determining training effectiveness.

In the second phase of our research, the basic research question was: does training in human behavior and group process skills improve the effectiveness of the trainer? This study was done at the same Department of Defense facility. All facilitators were all to this type of training, and their initial training in 1989 had concentrated exclusively on the "hard" skills of facilitation (e.g., activity & equipment set-up, safety procedures, activity process). A total of 174 employees attended this phase of the outdoor-based training program.

Before the 1990 training cycle began, these same five facilitators participated in an intensive 3-day train the trainer program which focussed primarily on human behavior and group interaction skills (including deoriefing & feedback). A total of 175 employees attended training during 1990. A MANOVA analysis, and individual ANOVA's were done to compare the effectiveness of the 1990 and 1989 programs. The results of this analysis are shown in table 2.

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Insert table 2 about here

As table 2 shows there was an overall significant MANOVA effect for 1990 versus 1989. The individual ANOVA's indicate that this difference was due primarily to an increase in the group effectiveness variable. Since this variable is the one most closely tied to actual task accomplishment, these results suggest that a facilitator trained in the "soft" skill areas of group process and human behavior will achieve significantly better results than a facilitator trained only in the "hard" ski'l areas.

Discussion

The current study suggests that the facilitator _does_ have an influence in improving crganizationally desired behaviors; and that facilitators trained in the "soft" skills of human behaviors and group processes will achieve better results than those facilitators trained only in the "hard" skill areas. While these results are interesting, problems with this type of quasi-experimental design suggest that this data be interpreted with caution by training professionals. The major problem with this type of study is the threat to internal validity. Internal validity refers to the extent to which the results of the study cannot be explained by alternative factors (Cook & Campbell, 1976). The three major threats to the internal validity of this type of study are: participant selection; history; and maturation.

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To reduce the threat to internal validity participants should have been randomly assigned to the 1989 and 1990 groups. In this EBTD program participant groups were asked to "volunteer" at the beginning of 1989, and were then assigned to the training programs for 1989 and 1990 based on availability of trainers, the training facility, and the schedule of the group. More than 70 groups signed up the first year, with only 13 actually trained. Twenty five additional groups were trained in 1990. Group selection could have resulted in picking groups with different abilities for the two years. This did not appear to be the case, since the selection was done by two members of the training department who had very limited knowledge of the actual composition of the groups. Since random selection is often impossible to use in actual work groups, this will be a persistent problem with field studies looking at training interventions.

A second threat to internal validity is that of history. Quite simply, this study took place over a period of 18 months, and during this time many other factors, besides the training program, may have accounted for the results we found. An examination of table 2 shows that not all of the variables changed and not all of the changes were in the same direction. Given the small possibility of a major change not related to the training causing the mixed results, this threat to internal validity may be minimal.

The third threat to internal validity, maturation, deals with the facilitators themselves. The old saying "practice makes perfect" would suggest that the trainers would get better simply by

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doing a lot of training. Again, if this were true then it would seem that all of the behaviors would have shown greater increases in 1990 than in 1989. This simply did not happen.

While we attempted to reduce the threats to internal validity throughout the research effort, we were unable to eliminate all of these problems. Therefore, we suggest that this research be viewed as preliminary in nature. Rather than providing the answer to the questions of facilitator training and effectiveness, we suggest that the results of this research may begin to direct us towards the questions to ask in future research. In addition, we suggest that future research in this area may need to use a true experimental methodology. Only by using this methodology will we be able to reduce or eliminate the threats to internal validity and thus make generalizable conclusions about the role of the facilitator in outdoor-based experiential training.

Among the important issues to be studied in future research are the following:

-Is there an ideal hard skill/soft skill ratio for facilitators?

- What are the consequences as well as ethical dilemmas when a trainer does not have a sound soft skill expertise to offer?

-Who has the better opportunity for program success: the facilitator who began his/her EBTD training with established soft skills competencies, or the facilitator who began with hard skills competencies?

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-What attributes make for a top-notch facilitator?   Do such
things as personality, education and corporate experience make
a difference?

-What are the specifics of a good facilitator training
program?

TABLE 1

ANCOVA ANALYSIS FOR FACILITATOR DIFFERENCES

Measure	Mean	Facilitator					F-value	p
		A	B	C	D	E		
Attitude	5.84	5.99	5.59	5.87	5.77	5.86	2.79	.026*
Self Esteem	2.80	2.67	2.78	3.67	2.67	2.84	2.74	.029*
Locus of Control	2.99	2.89	3.01	3.73	2.94	2.96	3.12	.015*
Problem Solving	5.85	6.07	5.76	5.59	5.81	5.78	2.64	.034*
Group Aware	6.29	6.64	5.97	7.56	5.81	6.23	2.52	.041*
Group Effective	4.98	5.07	4.41	6.18	4.42	5.29	1.75	.138
Trust	5.73	5.99	5.64	5.33	5.59	5.60	2.62	.168
Faith in peers	5.90	6.15	5.80	6.02	5.78	5.78	1.42	.053
Confidence in peers	5.56	5.83	5.49	5.74	5.39	5.42	1.06	.379
Group Clarity	5.78	6.13	5.24	6.92	5.24	5.85	1.58	.179
Group Cohesiveness	6.16	6.50	5.99	7.36	5.69	6.04	2.13	.076
Group Homogeneity	6.93	7.28	6.68	8.42	6.49	6.79	4.33	.002*
Self Assessment	5.78	5.92	5.70	5.71	5.83	5.68	1.72	.146

* p < .05

N = 369

A = 106
B = 47
C = 18
D = 77
E = 121

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TABLE 2

ANCOVA Results for 1989 VERSUS 1990: EBTD Participants

Source of Variance	(Increase or decrease) 1989	1990	F	p
Attitude Toward EBTD	+.98	+.60	----	----###
Locus of Control	-.05	+.00	0.59	.501
Self-Esteem	-.17	-.20	0.04	.847
Problem Solving	+.53	+.73	1.13	.288
Trust in Peers	+.15	+.10	0.16	.692
Group Awareness	+1.05	+1.04	0.11	.740
Group Effectiveness	+.20	+.82	4.03	.046*

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*      p < .05
**     p < .01
***    p < .001
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N = 175 participants in 1989 / 174 participants in 1990.

NOTE: MANOVA results on the effect of participation in EBTD indicate that a significantly greater overall improvement was seen in the 1990 program than was seen in the 1989 program. (Wilk's lambda = .94761, F = 2.147, p < .05).

Attitude toward EBTD was not included in the overall MANOVA, since our main concern was with behaviors, not attitude.

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