

Taking Camp Staff Training From Good To Best Practice

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Introduction

The Goal

The goal is to train staff so that they have the ability to be instrumental in the lives of campers. . .so that they can enact the mission and help realize the vision. The goal is to have an exceptional staff training that meets or exceeds current “best practice.” “Best” is always a moving target, but for present purposes, “best practice” simply means that it is a consensus held by numerous experts in diverse fields verified by rigorous evaluative efforts. See the benchmarking chapter for more information.

Certainly, you have some best practice elements in your camp right now. Given that, this information can serve as a check list; examine which elements you already have and which you might implement.

Coping with Realities

It’s impossible to summarize hundreds of studies and a dozen books *and* convey the depth of meaning and insight they would provide, but given that you don’t have the time to read them all, working with a thorough summary is a good option. If you have questions or would like to discuss things in more detail, feel free to send me an e-mail or give me call.

The answer isn’t simple. People are complex and simple answers are simply simplistic. Necessarily, there’s a lot of complex knowledge here, but if you follow the tenets and principles herein, you’ll have a training that takes advantage of best practices from several industries and disciplines. You’ll have a training that will enable staff to transform lives like never before. I guarantee it.

Please note that the PowerPoint presentation *WITH* audio should be used first! In concert, they will provide a compelling overview of the material. Afterwards, this chapter can serve as a refresher, checklist, and provide more detailed information in some areas. More examples and rationale are also presented in this text. Going through the material twice in different mediums with slightly different information will serve to aid memory and create connections in the brain. Also, some information is only presented in the PowerPoint show with the audio, because that format was a better fit.

The Problem

The elements presented in the main body of this chapter may strike you as generally good ideas, but I want to convey the necessity of implementing them in order to be very effective. . . in order to be an exceptional camp. To that end, I must take a moment to describe the problems with trainings as they stand.

My Story

I’ve been to a dozen camp trainings at 11 different¹ camps. I attended those camps from day one to the last day of the summer and was able to witness the effect of training done in very different ways at very different camps. Beyond camp, I have also attended six residential and twelve non-residential trainings in the small business, non-profit, and corporate world.

These experiences have driven home the point that what is covered in training is not necessarily what happens during the summer or on the job. Experienced camp folks know this all too well. What was also clear is that certain training models yielded better results than others, and that experience is reflected in this chapter.

Beyond this practical, in-the-trenches experience, I bring a doctorate in psychology with concentrations in social, developmental, and organizational. The hard-won, valid principles of human behavior that are relevant and useful are reflected throughout this chapter. In addition, scores of specific, scientific examinations of trainings have revealed much about what works and what doesn’t. In concert, the staff training best practices are clear and they are described below with a camp focus, so that camps may do an even better job of enriching lives and changing the world.

¹ Working at so many different camps was done on purpose so that I could have a broad understanding of how summer camps operate and what they do to change the lives of children and staff. This practical, diverse education has been invaluable.

Studies of Summer Camps

It is very rare for studies involving summer camps to assess training and link it to outcomes. Nevertheless, there are some studies that offer some interesting results. The culture resource offers further evidence.

Paul Marsh (Marsh, 1999) synthesized the results of 37 studies which independently examined the effect summer camps have on self-esteem. The camps examined were quite diverse and represented a broad spectrum. The results indicated that the camps had virtually no impact. The effect size was so small that it is essentially meaningless. Even the camps that made a significant effort to target self-esteem had a smaller than small effect, scientifically speaking. We don't really know for sure why these results occurred, but staff training was likely a key factor.

Ninety-seven Outward Bound type programs were scientifically examined (Hattie, Marsh, Neill, & Richards, 1997) to determine outcomes and effectiveness. These programs were studied by different people, but they were all examined as a whole by a team to ascertain trends not evident from a single-study perspective. The quality of the staff (p.73) is a plausible reason for the differential benefit received by participants in programs with high and low effects.

To get more specific, one camp examined 17 different outcomes (social skills, self-esteem, grades, hope about the future, and more) compared with a control group, who didn't experience the camp program (Grayson, 2001). This camp had a 1:3 counselor to camper ratio and a 1:9 supervisor to counselor ratio. They had a two week training and children attended for about three weeks. This camp is nationally known and even received an Eleanor Eells Award. Only about 15% of the children walked away with any significant effect. The rest were no different from children in the control group, who didn't attend camp, but were similar in almost every other measurable way. This was true even after children had attended for three summers! A key factor in these results was staff training. After implementing staff training best practices, this camp was able to double their effectiveness (scientifically assessed) in one year. Future summers will likely yield even more impressive results, especially when other elements like culture are taken into account.

Why Am I Telling You This?

Although camp can change children's lives, it takes an exceptional camp to do so. Sure, you've got to have a great program that is capable of impacting children and staff, but after that, you've got to have the people to implement your great program.

The camp is only so many buildings and trees and frogs and such. It's only so many computer files and binders. It's the people who *breath life into the program and make it real*. The staff are the camp. Those staff are the people who create the culture and change lives. Those staff must have the skill (knowledge, attitude, and behavioral ability) to do it. Camps with well-trained staff have one of the key ingredients that separate effective, exceptional camps from those that are just playing in the sun. What I'm telling you is that the evidence to date shows that Outward Bound and scores of camps frequently don't achieve their missions and visions. They aren't changing lives like they want to, or at least as many as they would want to.

It would be nice to chalk it up to staff hiring problems, but the problem goes much deeper than that. The hiring process is absolutely key, *but college students very rarely have most of the skills they'll need to be instrumental in the children's lives*. They must be trained and trained well. With few exceptions, the usual college students hired by camps trained in typical fashions did not cut it. See the "Billion Dollar Mistake" appendix for a further discussion of this point. It's hard to believe that all of those camps and Outward Bound programs run by professionals simply did a bad job of hiring. Even an excellent two-week training did not make enough of an impact. The good news is that changes in staff training can be made to create counselors who have a true ability to fundamentally change children's lives.

I also want to tell you that camps are in great company with these results. Parent Effectiveness Trainings (PET), the Fortune 500, and the D.A.R.E. programs are just some examples I want to go over with you to further illustrate my point about how vital training is and how difficult it is to do it well. Although all of these case studies show follies, they were also fixed and have important lessons for all of us. Those lessons are the bulk of this chapter.

Studies of PET, Fortune 500, and D.A.R.E.

Parent Effectiveness Trainings typically follow the format of all-day trainings every other weekend for three months. They are trained in parenting skills such as behavior management, much like camps train staff – lecture, role plays, and discussions. Note that PET participants received about 100 hours of training in a specific domain, whereas camps can only offer a tiny fraction of that. The unfortunate result of numerous evaluation studies (Alliger, 1989; Kazdin, Holland, & Crowley, 1997; McMahan, 1999; Prinz & Miller, 1996; & Tracey, 1995) is that

the majority of participants didn't change their behavior much unless the training targeted knowledge, attitude, and provided behavioral training (discussed later). The good news is that some PET programs went back to the drawing board and figured out what went wrong and fixed it so that now about 95% of the participants (in excellent programs) understand and utilize effective parenting skills.

The Fortune 500 companies (500 largest companies in America) spend about 1 billion dollars a year on training. As a consortium, they decided to take a crack at evaluating the effectiveness of leadership training (Goleman, 1998), which is something camps try and impart to counselors and CITs alike. The abysmal results were that roughly 90-95% of the trainings were ineffective. The numerous studies conducted also offered recommendations for how these trainings could be made more effective, which is the bulk of this chapter. For a short and lighthearted discussion along these lines, please see the recent article "Mystified by Training? Here Are Some Clues" in the appendix.

Finally, let's look at the D.A.R.E. program (Drug and Alcohol Resistance Education). As of 1993, 4.5 million children had gone through the program. The results of several studies revealed that the children knew a lot about drugs. They knew the types, their effects, and were trained how to resist using them. Unfortunately, there was no attitude change and no behavior change. Children who went through the program were no less likely to use drugs or care about using drugs than those who had never heard of D.A.R.E. It was a worthless program. Thankfully, the program was redesigned with training best practices in mind and the program is now much more effective. Unfortunately, it isn't very effective though and probably never will be, because the program can't take advantage of behavioral training in a very meaningful way.

The lessons learned are the universal training principles that apply to human beings whether at camp, in a large organization, working with kids and drug education, or the many other examples I'll discuss later.

One For All And All For One

Knowledge. Attitude. Behavior. These are the three keys to best-practice training. Knowledge is the information that makes it into the student's head in a way that he or she can really use it. It's the book learning. It's being able to pass an excellent paper and pencil test. Attitude means that your heart and will—the firm desire to do something—are in place. Behavior refers to the student's actual ability to do the skill. It is practicing something to the point where you own it. For example, a surgeon has the knowledge gained from years of study in medical school and, hopefully, the attitude to practice and do her best, but without sufficient practice (behavior—residency), I wouldn't want to go under her knife.

These are the three elements to a best practice training and the structure for the rest of the chapter. Orientation/Trainings need to proportionately focus on the knowledge, attitude, and behavioral components of any given skill, because when any component is lacking, it is unlikely that the skill will be performed, or performed well. When that happens, it means you aren't achieving your goals for the campers. Let's look at three examples to illustrate this crucial point.

Knowledge

Knowledge is essential, but alone it isn't enough. I've seen many camps spend a lot of time focused on the knowledge component (albeit in an excellent way) to the detriment of the others. Let's take a look at what happens when that is the case.

Dale Carnegie wrote a famous book called "How to Win Friends and Influence People." His tenets have been turned into a national training program, which involves eight Saturdays straight through. The format is lecture with some reading homework, discussions, and the occasional role play. The lectures are dynamic with pumped-up trainers giving compelling speeches.

They did an evaluation with the goal of using the results to market the program. What they found is that months later people who went through their training were largely indistinguishable from those who didn't attend the program. Why? Because no matter how creative, compelling, and expert you are at conveying excellent knowledge, knowledge alone isn't enough. Take this point to heart, because it is a common problem.

Attitude

As we'll get into more detail later, sufficient attitude is necessary to see knowledge put into practice, but it comes at a very high price. Let me offer the following example of why attitude is necessary, but insufficient.

A hospital hired me to find out if giving their employees an hour long massage once a week for six months would influence the employees' physical health, mental health, and job performance. It seemed like an interesting question that no one knew the answer to, so I agreed to check it out. I alphabetized the entire staff by last name and then selected every other one to get a massage and let the remaining folks serve as the control group (they got their massages when the study was over). Measures were taken on blood pressure, pulse, stress cortisol, anxiety, happiness, job performance, and much, much more.

The results were that a small, positive benefit was gained on most physical and mental measures, but it only lasted roughly 24 hours. Over the long haul, only a small gain in happiness was evident. There was no effect on job performance. Why? Because in order for a better/higher attitude to influence job performance, it would have to coincide with increased knowledge about how to do the job better and the behavioral ability/practice to carry that knowledge out. It's all for one and one for all.

B e h a v i o r

Behavior is the act of doing something. For present purposes, it is also the ability to do something. Whether it be self-control, flipping a coin, working with a distressed child, counseling a staff member, or maintaining a good stress level, being able to carry those things out is what is meant by behavior. This will be addressed in spades later in the chapter, so we'll leave further explanation until then.

NOTE:

(For the sake of simplicity and space, behavior management skills will be the focus. The framework can and should be applied to almost any skill/behavior – especially complex ones)

Knowledge

Knowledge Is A Necessary But Insufficient Condition

Often, the approach taken during orientations is to convey knowledge. Less often is the focus on changing *attitudes* about using the knowledge. Rarely is much attention dedicated to the actual *practice* of using the knowledge. As just noted, targeting knowledge primarily or alone is frequently ineffective. One only has to take a brief look at American society to see the effect of such campaigns.

America is the most overweight, workaholic, industrial nation in the world, despite the fact that most people *know* what encompasses a healthy lifestyle. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the level of physical activity among adults remained stagnant between 1990 and 1998 in a country where half of the adults are considered overweight and about 18 percent are obese. During that period, only 25 percent of adults aged 18 and over met the federal government's basic physical activity recommendations. You're not going to be able to walk into a McDonalds and yell that the food is unhealthy and surprise anyone. People *know* that McDonalds isn't health food. Knowledge isn't enough.

Living through a heart attack or stroke might seem to be a wake-up call, prompting patients to make major life changes to reduce their risk. However, the results of a new study suggest that many survivors (50%) of a heart attack or stroke don't make enough changes in their diet and lifestyle, or take adequate medication, to prevent a second heart attack or stroke.

As another example, many people at high risk for HIV transmission understand how the disease is transmitted, and yet thousands of those people still contract the disease. In Great Britain, 3,435 new cases of HIV infection were reported in 2000 --14% more than in 1999. Knowledge about the disease is not their problem.

Similarly, only 20% of college males in this country used condoms consistently, and just half said they always used them with a new partner. Other examples include wearing seat belts, smoking, using drugs, recycling, speeding, and parenting skills.

Although knowledge is quite necessary, in and of itself, it isn't enough. Because knowledge is necessary and there are best-practice methods of conveying it, a few of those principles are detailed next.

Enhancing Knowledge

Camps generally do a fantastic job of conveying knowledge. They involve the counselors in learning, keep it playful and moving, respect and utilize counselors' knowledge, and cover a ton of material in a short amount of time. *Having accurate knowledge conveyed by experts in a dynamic way is quite the tall order in and of itself!* See the "adult learning theory" resource for more on that. To be even more effective with this crucial task, there are a few principles that many camps would benefit from implementing. After all, knowledge is one of the three keys to the kingdom.

Let's use the example of behavior management training. A camp's behavior management training might include explaining the four main parenting styles and their effect, information about minor interventions (proximity control, the look, humor, planned ignorral, etc.), educational counseling for more serious behavior problems (e.g., Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy or Reality Therapy), understanding of the limitations of punishment and the buddy style, prevention techniques, and even perhaps some education about emotional intelligence coaching and bases of power. Please see the behavior management chapter and slides 15 – 18 (with audio) of this presentation for more information and guidelines.

When conveying this crucial mass of information, what are some of the critical principles to keep in mind? What are a few of the best practices for transferring knowledge? They are discussed below.

Working With Mother Nature -- 7 + or - 2

What Is This?

A highly reliable scientific finding is that working memory can only hold about 7 items, plus or minus 2. The variation takes into account individuals with differing ability – some can hold only 5, while others can work with 9 (see presentation slide number 12). This number has naturally found itself in our everyday lives in countless ways – e.g. telephone numbers are seven digits. When popular magazines offer a list that ones needs to remember, it almost always conforms to 7 + / - 2. Also, try the opposite; try and remember the last top 10 list you heard. Camps need to keep lists they want people to remember and use to 7 items or less.

Reference vs. Working Memory

It is important to know the difference between working and long-term memory. To illustrate that I mean working knowledge, try the following exercise. Think (don't write it down) of 10 names and then alphabetize them by the third character. If you chose names of people you know, try doing it again with random names. Now try it with 7 names and the fifth (or last) character. That is working knowledge. You can't do much else with your brain while you're doing that. If you can, it is likely something that is well practiced.

Long lists of information can certainly be useful for reference (such as this resource). When one reads the 50 ways to improve self-esteem or the 20 immutable laws of parenting, the information in those lists may be important and useful. Referencing those actual lists and concepts can be a worthwhile endeavor – especially when making structural, policy, or process changes. However, one is far more likely to walk away with a general “gist” of the information than specifics to actually use in daily life (see presentation slides 15 – 18). If specifics are remembered, it is likely that they number no more than 7 – especially after a couple of days.

With concerted effort, long lists of information can certainly be remembered, but it is very difficult to use more than 7 bits of information on the fly. The exception is when the information has become habit; it is known so stone cold that the brain doesn't really have to think about it anymore.

The high price of ignoring mother nature

When a problem arises and a counselor / parent / teacher has to deal with it, it is unlikely that the person will be able to recall items on a longer list, let alone work with them under stress. Try thoroughly reading one of the lists on slides 15 - 17 and work hard to remember it, then, in a week, use this information in the next conflict you find yourself in (adult or child). How many items could you remember? How much effort did you have to expend to do so? Did you miss any important ones? Are there items not represented in this list that should also be remembered? How did stress affect your ability to recall and apply this list?

Again, a long list can be used for reference and to gain a general sense of philosophy and options, but they can't be worked with easily. Before and after an actual behavior management intervention, these would be good lists to reference. If the lists could be referenced with a mentor, that would be even better.

The behavior management guidelines and principles often conveyed to staff are long and sometimes unsystematic (see behavior management chapter). Furthermore, under stress, the number of items one can work with in memory drops – sometimes as low as 3! That is why the Red Cross has their ABC mnemonic and the emergency number is 911. Thus, action plans/steps need to fit 7 +/- 2, and three to five items should be the target.

I've seen too many trainings in and out of the camping industry violate the rule of 7 + or - 2. The trainers feel good because they got a lot of information across, but what they don't realize is that they really didn't. If you want your staff to be effective, don't blow their minds.

Coping with 7 + or - 2

Acronyms are a useful method (see presentation slide 19 and the behavior management resource) for making lists more memorable. **Chunking**, using a key or trigger to recall another list of 7 or so items, is useful for recalling knowledge, but not so useful for working with that recalled knowledge on the fly. An example of chunking would be using the Knowledge, Attitude, and Behavior framework of this article as triggers to remembering the subheads under each.

If you have longer lists of behavior management guidelines and principles, don't throw them out. Try printing them on **business cards** and putting one principle in the staff's mailbox every day. If you print a daily **schedule**, include the “Principle Of The Day.” Such techniques serve as reminders, but they don't aid working knowledge.

A final memory technique related to chunking is remembering a small list of items that each has far greater significance. For example, remembering Barnes, all behavior is communication, and Gumby can trigger several important frames of mind and “specifics” without actually having to really recall them all individually. When the heat is on, remembering three things is very doable. In this case, Barnes might be the trigger for your hero who you've seen work really well with children. By remembering Barnes, you'll be able to have that model in your working memory and, so to speak, only use one item! Recalling “all behavior is communication” could trigger one to remember the five likely goals of children's behavior and that all behavior occurs for reason. For Gumby, I have seen a director tell a very moving and effective fictional story about “How Gumby Saved The Children.” Gumby did a lot to save the children, and, as before, those can be triggered in spirit. To be effective, Gumby should be a continued mantra throughout the summer.

These techniques are helpful, but they're even more useful when utilized with a list of 7 or less.

Transferring Skills – Lessons From Cognitive Psychology

Following are three principles that have proven to be very effective in transferring knowledge. Excellent education programs in any forum take advantage of them as much as possible.

If you don't provide the **blueprint/map**, expect the learners to probably get lost, be confused, or be ineffective. Provide an overall structure with which counselors can organize all the information they are receiving. It is much more effective to give people the complete jigsaw puzzle picture and then give them the pieces to work with rather than the other way around. It prepares the brain to effectively store knowledge and link it to existing information.

Start off knowledge sessions with a map – books have tables of contents, presentations have outlines, and elements are categorized in the periodic table. For behavior management, Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy and Reality Therapy both have nice frameworks from which to work. A systematic plan (map) should help the counselor structure the interaction / intervention and cover all the important bases in an appropriate order and manner. Doing role plays and discussing situations without providing the bigger picture is like teaching the nature and makeup of a few chemical elements and hoping the staff will intuit the whole periodic table! *Start and end every training (lecture or one-on-one modeling/scaffolding) with the blueprint/complete jigsaw puzzle picture.* Situational discussions and games such as “S’mores and other sticky stuff” often fall into the same quagmire.

A similar point is to **abstract out the goal, the problem, and the solution**. This should be done on a macro and micro level. On a macro level, let the counselors know (goal) why these behavior management practices are necessary in terms of what the outcomes are for the children. Communicate why other common behavior management strategies don't work (problem), and why the one you are about to teach them does work (solution). On a micro level, when going over specific behavior scenarios, be sure to touch on the goal of the behavior, why the behavior is a problem, and the solution. Again, the suggested behavior management techniques all have these points built into them. The goal, problem, and solution need to be made explicit – state them often. Despite what people often think, they are frequently not obvious or remembered from an example or lecture.

Provide **multiple settings in which information is encoded**. Demonstrate how the behavior management steps can be applied in different contexts (camp, school, siblings), with different problems (parenting, personal relationships, conflict resolution), and even ask counselors to think of new applications themselves. Retrieval of information is more likely because there are more cues associated with it. Knowledge is more likely to be retained and used when it is attached to more nodes in the brain. Also, using radically different contexts or applications can finally send the point home, whereas examples that are in the same ballpark or even country may not do the trick.

When is knowledge enough?

To say that knowledge is always insufficient is to belie what we all know is true – sometimes, knowledge is enough. If someone yells “Fire!” in a theater, darn near everyone is going to take action. There are two considerations to understanding whether or not knowledge is enough for action.

The first is if there is sufficient attitude present. It's like telling a child, “Eat your vegetables. You know they're good for you.” “No, I don't want to!” comes the reply. If the desire to act isn't present, sufficient coercion must be present to force the act. “Eat them or else no dessert!” warns the parent. While that may be stating the obvious, what isn't so obvious is how difficult it is to obtain a sufficient degree of attitude necessary for behavior to take place. That is discussed in detail in the next section.

The second consideration is the difficulty of the task. Simple tasks like flipping a coin or running out of a theater don't really require practice. However, if the task can't be duplicated with knowledge or simple modeling, it must be practiced. The degree of practice necessary depends on things like the difficulty of the task and the characteristics of the student. Where camps, PET, Fortune companies, and others go wrong is in believing that the tasks they're teaching are easier than they are. These points are detailed in the third section of this resource (behavior) as well as “The Billion Dollar Mistake” section. For now, it is very important to know that the difficulty of learning most things requires a greater degree of practice than could possibly be managed during an orientation period. If the standard level of training and practice were sufficient, the results described in the “Studies of Summer Camps” and “Studies of PET, Fortune 500, and D.A.R.E.” sections would be different.

Attitude

What Is It?

In essence, attitude involves selling the person's heart and soul. When ideas are internalized, there is a constant striving towards a goal through specific behaviors. People care and it shows. However, attitude isn't a "you have it or you don't" kind of thing—attitude strength varies. For example, people have different degrees of attitude strength regarding appropriate TV use, organic foods, and abortion. For an attitude to translate into behavior (especially consistently), it must be *very, very* strong!

It's Important, But That Important?!

Having sufficient attitude strength is as important as it is difficult to obtain. For example, America is the most overweight, workaholic, industrialized country in the world, despite knowing what a healthy lifestyle is. Other examples include speeding, recycling, and high-risk HIV candidates who know how the disease is transmitted, yet still contract it. Religious people can understand the Ten Commandments and frequently fail to live up to them. Parents who love their children can receive parenting education and fail to use that knowledge. Most children (and adults) know they should use television and media in moderation, and yet the national average for children is 40 hours per week!

Closer to home, in the 2001 ACA elections, only 27% of the members voted. For president of the United States, the non-enviable average is around 50%. The membership of the ACA, people who espouse community values, civic duty, and youth development to their campers and staff, should be even more likely to vote. They aren't.

Seat belt use is around 68% in the country. Picture this. A candy striper walks into a hospital room where someone incurred a broken arm, an amputated leg, head injuries, and numerous cuts and bruises because this person didn't wear their seatbelt. If the candy striper informed the injured person about seat belt use, the reaction would unlikely be, "No, you're kidding!? You mean that that little dangly thing above my left shoulder was designed to prevent injury!? You mean that if I had only known about it and used it, I wouldn't be here today with all these problems!? No! You must be joking!?" Knowing something isn't enough. There must be sufficient attitude behind that knowledge for it to transfer into behavior.

Clearly, what should pass for sufficient attitude for change or action often falls short of the mark. Attitude comes at a price more precious than gold or saffron. Following are some very brief techniques you can use to try and boost the likelihood that what people know will result in behavior.

Enhancing Attitude

Preach to the Choir

The best strategy is to hire staff who already have their hearts, souls, values, and goals invested in giving kids a world of good – staff who truly want to change lives and enrich the world. By utilizing good interviewing skills and questions, the attitudes of potential counselors can often be successfully tapped. Bob Ditter has gleaned the best practices in this area and adapted them to camp. The enculturation section of the culture resource also has a wealth of suggestions.

If you're not preaching to the choir, or the uncommitted (those without any strong belief/attitude on the topic), shaping or changing attitudes is a Herculean task not likely to be accomplished during orientation. You could have the best, most effective orientation of any camp in the country, but if it falls on staff who don't really, truly care, it's unlikely they will remember or use the information/knowledge well. Again, were this an easy task, the camps noted before would have had more success in influencing the outcomes they valued. Finding truly committed staff is a challenge.

Attitude Subversion

It is possible for attitude to subvert knowledge. Because staff often have to learn how to interact with children in a different way from their default style learned through experience, it is helpful to try and hire staff who are open and flexible enough to change. Again, this is an important part of the hiring process.

It is especially hard to teach those who "already know how to do it" a different, better way, because first they have to accept that they might be wrong – a difficult task for most humans. Beware of counselors who claim they already know it because they have been babysitting for years, are a sophomore in the education program, a senior in the psychology program, were here last year, or whatever. Using the orientation story resource is helpful for this point. Returning staff often come with this attitude, but they can be worked with if they are intimately involved in the training.

One powerful method is to have staff learn material in small groups that needs to be taught to everyone, and then have them teach that knowledge to everyone. In this manner, each small group knows something different and must teach it to whole group. This cooperative education method works on several levels:

- we truly know something when we have to teach it to others,
- staff are more likely to listen when it comes from peers,
- the small groups usually come up with very entertaining ways to get the knowledge across, and
- returning staff are involved.

This works especially well when people who will eventually make up a cabin group are placed in different learning groups. Also, make sure you have a member of the administration as part of every group.

Staff who believe they are on the same page and that they comprehend and understand the knowledge may tune out and stop processing, when in reality, they don't have a full grasp of the principles (refer to section on seeing the forest for the trees). In other words, they don't know what they think they know. For the previous point, staff don't listen because they think they know better than you. In this point, they don't listen because they think they have already heard you and understand perfectly. Try using the believing and doubting game resource with these staff, although this problem usually surfaces during the summer and requires retraining in knowledge, attitude, and behavior. The culture change model in the culture resource also has several useful principles.

These points are taken up again in the "That's true of them, but not me" section below.

Using the Power of Story

People are almost never fundamentally changed for the long term through passive lectures and large group activities, no matter how inspirational and powerful. Large group discussions and sales pitches (heartfelt, enthusiastic, or both) are rarely successful. If these approaches worked, church services, television evangelism, large self-help seminars, and some movies would have more of an impact. When they work, they tend to influence those who were already "there" (or largely there) attitudinally. They are useful for fostering and building momentum for those already moving in something close to the right direction.

Recognizing the limitations in changing attitudes, it is still important to build attitude strength. Try using the power of stories. Read the staff letters you have from parents who told you how meaningful the experience was for their child. Better yet, have a parent come in and tell the staff in person. Tell them stories about how you've seen children changed by the camp experience. Have past staff get up and tell their peers about their experiences (or read past letters to that effect). If you have staff who were campers, have them talk about their experiences. And, very importantly, make sure the director explains why she/he is willing to work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for three months and endure all the hardships! Sprinkle stories generously throughout the summer, and not just during orientation.

Remove Structural Barriers

Make it easy to practice what one believes by removing structural barriers. When people are under any significant stress (long hours, sleep deprived, personal needs not met, time crunch, bad mood, situation is a crisis/overwhelming, enmeshed in situation and lose perspective, etc.), they tend to resort to experience as opposed to knowledge. Technically, it's called Cognitive Resource Theory and the military and large organizations are very familiar with it. When the pressure is on, people are more likely to resort to their gut reactions. Usually, the gut reaction isn't one's learned knowledge, unless it has been practiced so many times in real situations that it becomes one's second nature. That's why the military has learned to train people in as real a situation as is possible, as much as possible.

When you're tired, hot, overworked, and underpaid, it's very hard to care. A common refrain in the sporting world is: "Yes, but can you do it under pressure?" Pressure comes in both the intense and constant background forms. Both make it difficult to actually do what you know. Whatever the reason for the stress, when people start saying things like "I just can't think!" or "I know, I know, but I didn't have the time!" or "I know, but I'm tired and this is hard." you know that the ability to practice what one preaches is diminished. It's a principal reason why Parent Effectiveness Training and leadership trainings fail. Understaffing and under-qualified staff are often key culprits (see organizational factors resource).

Another structural issue is staff motivation (perks, fun, praise, paid enough, etc.). When morale and motivation slump, it's that much harder to muster the effort to care. See the staff motivation resource for more information.

The structural barriers are often ignored, or accepted as impossible to change, but doing either severely reduces the likelihood of desirable behaviors occurring, or occurring regularly. This point is easy to lose in a sea of text, but make no mistake, phenomenal programs and institutions have missed this point and largely forfeited many of their positive outcomes.

Base of Power

Once upon a time (really), there was an enthusiastic counselor with his heart in the right place, but his judgment was slightly off. This person was well loved by children and staff, but he sometimes played practical jokes that weren't very appreciated. The director, assistant director, and unit head sat this counselor down in the office and outlined the problem carefully. They explained that he was on probation and that if there was another incident, he would be fired. This would stay on his camp record for two years, but if things got better, he would be welcome to return next year. The counselor left dumfounded. He did change his behavior, but he wasn't as enthusiastic or effective. More importantly, he didn't become a better counselor and he didn't return.

A better scenario would have been for the leadership to work with the counselor from common ground. At the core, they all wanted the same thing – a fun, safe, beneficial summer. If they had started from this end, and discussed the means in a Socratic process (using questions instead of statements), the story would have ended differently. By *pulling from within* and not *controlling from the outside*, the staff member would have been both corrected and energized. See the behavior management resource and the supervisor in group guidelines appendix for more information.

On an individual or small group level, trainers need to relate utilization of the knowledge to the trainees' values, hopes, goals, and dreams. Change comes from learning that fits a person's life, resources, interests, and goals. Such a tactic is as powerful as it is time consuming, but there are few substitutes. Pervasive and fundamental change almost never occurs from the use of monitoring, power, and punishment (what some people do for supervision). If it did, prisons would work great. At best, compliance instead of conversion is achieved.

Cog in The Machine

Fortune 500 companies often hire people to play board games with their employees. Why? Because the object of these board games and the goal for the trainer is to help people understand how their actions influence the outcomes the organization cares about.

Counselors (and even the administration) often don't have a full, concrete idea of what the outcomes (goals, benefits) of the camp experience are. Furthermore, a clear, conscious understanding of how those outcomes are achieved is exceedingly rare. You don't have to take my word for it though, ask your staff. At the end of orientation, ask them to take out a blank piece of paper and write down a list of all the outcomes that they think the children receive. Which ones were missing? Were there some that seemed unlikely or ill suited to your camp? Even more interesting and useful, ask your staff to describe how each of those outcomes is achieved. Much will likely be missing.

Once upon a time (really), a cabin was walking down to the bathhouse to clean it. Every cabin had a community job to do in the morning. The campers were complaining, because this was their least favorite job to do. One vocal camper was complaining bitterly, "Oh man! This sucks! This camp is so bootleg; we paid a lot of money! They should just hire someone to do this! How come they don't?" The counselor's response was "I don't know. Look, this is just how it is. We have to do it. Everyone has to do it eventually and today it's our turn. If you complain, it's going to take that much longer. Let's just get it over with so we can get on to the fun stuff."

The counselor didn't get it. Counselors are often not aware of all the outcomes of a camp experience and their role in achieving each one of them. Process models (see that resource) can be very effective here, especially if they are hung in the staff lounge so that they can serve as a reminder on a continual basis.

The above counselor's response isn't what you would have hoped for. Instead, ideally, the counselor should have replied, "We all live in a community here at camp, and we all need to contribute. This is our job today and everyone has one. By doing this, we make the camp a nicer place to live. The camp could pay someone to do it, but that would make the camp more expensive for everyone to attend. Some people here couldn't afford it." If your counselor were really awesome, she or he might relate it to the broader community: "When people do their part to recycle or vote, they are all working together to accomplish more than anyone could do by himself or herself." Better still would be for the counselor to ask pointed questions so that the camper could answer his own question.

Termites

Termites are those lovely little insects that weaken the framework. They do so in such a way as to not be conspicuous until it is probably too late. A building (camp) may look okay from the outside, but a closer inspection will reveal the problems. Camps and large organizations alike have the same problem—they all have termites.

A person termite is someone who doesn't really quite buy in to the program. Termites are people who are not "sold" and quietly go around denigrating and subverting the knowledge—usually in an effort to get people to agree with them even a little. These are the people who whisper walking down the wood paths or in the cabins late at night. "That's what they say, but here's what you can really get away with." or "Let me tell you the real story behind (her, this, the place)." or "This place sucks so bad, man, can you believe the crap they keep pulling?" When the termites are returning counselors, they are especially deadly, because they often set norms and culture more than you do.

Termites range from weak to very powerful. Following is a recipe for an especially effective termite. A termite with any of these characteristics is bad. At any level, the range of thought and behavior has been expanded merely by their influence, which can create distraction or disruption.

- They are generally consistent and persistent.
- They are not overly stubborn, so as not to be viewed as completely unreasonable.
- They have informal status (returning staff, "cool," appeal to subgroup norms and values, etc.)
- They have formal status – legitimate power.
- Their power has not been usurped by being invited to an open, problem-solving discussion in good faith with those whom the termite is denigrating.
- They have a viral effect (contagious) and create a subgroup/cell of discontent around an issue.
- Because they are needed, they can't be (or aren't) expelled from the environment after due diligence in attitude change. If they are expelled, they can serve as martyrs for their cause.
- They can't be dismissed because they are being petty, unobjective, or have an illegitimate ulterior motive.

Despite doing everything possible to engender a positive attitude that will translate to behavior, a few termites will eat small holes in your work and may even weaken the attitudes of many. Just like the real thing, catch them quickly! Put "Termites" on your supervisors' agendas as a permanent item.

What do you do with them once you've identified your termites? Use the information in the behavior management resource and the culture change model from the culture resource. Also from the latter, a careful job of enculturation is the best preventative – pesticide if you will.

Majority Rules

Usually, but not always, the psychological majority rules in small communities. You can use this on two levels. On the small group level, let's say you have cabins with three counselors. Place two strong counselors with one weak one. If a marginal counselor is in a group with two strong, committed counselors, attitude can rub off, or at least make it difficult to violate positive peer pressure.

On a whole camp level, a camp norm around caring for the children is extremely powerful. This is most easily achieved through critical mass (the majority of the staff are already sold heart and soul) and historical precedent. Call it what you will, critical mass, the 100th monkey, or synergy, an established organizational culture can have an enormous impact. Please see the culture resource for much more information on this vital point.

That's True of Them, But Not Me!

On a larger scale, it is important to note that the D.A.R.E., PET, Fortune leadership programs, and the aforementioned camp all thought they were doing a good job. It was only after a thorough, systematic evaluation effort(s) that they learned that they had room to improve. Their attitude and "knowledge" that they were on the right track prevented them from having the impact on behavior for which they were hoping. The D.A.R.E. program needed to do a better job of targeting the attitude component and PET, the camp, and the leadership programs needed to focus on the behavioral side of things.

In the culture resource, there are two key appendices which drive home this point for camps. The first discusses why satisfaction measures of outcomes are not good assessments of the benefits campers receive. The second discusses the need for accurate evaluations. Again, well-rounded and effective training programs are the exception, not the rule. Initially, attitude crippled the ability of all these program to change, grow, and be more effective.

Your program may be exceptional and achieving its outcomes to a record degree, but how do you know?

Behavior

For the sake of this discussion, it is assumed that the knowledge has been transferred very well and the attitude is truly present. In other words, the person is capable of successfully teaching the concept (in theory) to others and their hearts and souls are dedicated to using that owned knowledge. Both are a very tall order indeed without even getting to the behavior part yet.

Knowledge + Attitude = Dedicated Novice

Explanation and Examples

Having the knowledge to do something and the attitude/desire to do it is rarely enough. A dedicated novice wants to succeed, but doesn't have the practice time necessary to do it. Let's look at a few examples of this to get a better understanding and appreciation for this fact.

A genius child wants to ride a bicycle. She understands everything about the physics of it and wants to ride so badly she can taste it. She gets on the bike, starts off down the street, and her first experience likely isn't a very pretty one. The adult equivalent is skateboarding. Try this out and you'll see that competence takes a while!

How about a less physical skill like teaching. Good teacher trainings involve academic study at a university with practical experience teaching gained after a couple years. Teachers in training work first under another teacher and then in a classroom by themselves with a mentor available when needed. This extended process involving years is necessary to produce a teacher capable of successfully instructing children.

How about a profession where there is more of a mix like a surgeon. There are a lot of physical elements to the job as well as knowledge. The best practice is to train for 3 or 4 years in a university followed by a residency (practice) for another 3 or 4 years. Even after that, folks are usually more comfortable with a surgeon who has a little gray hair and a few hundred surgeries under their belt.

Now let's look at something we're more familiar with – camp counseling. They likely came to camp with the physical skills necessary, but the social and emotional benefits of a camp experience are the focus here. The standard practice is to hire university students (who are usually heavy on the knowledge side) and train them for a week with more knowledge and some behavioral training. For the most part, even at the end of orientation, counselors are dedicated novices. If they had the skills necessary, the evidence presented in this resource for camps, PET, Fortune 500 trainings, and others would be different.

The best practice training method for behavior is apprenticeships. It's what works for teachers and doctors. Counseling psychologists are also trained through extensive internships and practicums. Daniel Goleman, of Emotional Intelligence fame, set out to determine the best practices in improving people's emotional intelligence. His results are exactly what I'm telling you throughout this presentation (<http://eiconsortium.org/research/guidelines.htm>). Most sports involve practice, practice, practice. Insurance companies give better rates to older drivers (up to 25 usually), because they've had more practice and are better. Imagine the teenager who studied the DMV manual (knowledge) and passed the test with flying colors, really wants to drive (attitude), and sets out. Teenagers get in a lot of wrecks and a best practice is drivers' education.

Specific studies that demonstrate the point

Training takes a lot of time and is best done through modeling and scaffolding – see next sections. First, let's look at mutual fund managers at time when the stock market wasn't doing so well. These figures are averages taken from Fortune magazine.

Fund manager tenure – 3/00 – 3/01

- o Average fund -17.13%
- o S&P 500 -21.61%
- o <4 years experience -20.1%
- o More than four years -14.9%
- o Ten or more years -8.1%
- o 20 or more years -5.4%

It's quite clear that experience makes a big difference. Since camps are often concerned with the social and emotional gain in campers, let's look at a couple of examples in that area. MBA (master of business administration) graduates do no better on financial or performance reviews than those without them. Why? The key factor is that they have the knowledge, but not the practical experience (behavior). The practiced MBAs are the ones who do well.

An executive coaching (Manchester USA) company specializes in “growth oriented” or “change oriented” training. One principal goal is to improve these managers ability with people. This example is interesting because camps hope to improve the ability of staff to be instrumental in campers’ lives. Thus, “training” for change occurs from the administration to the counselors, and then from the counselors to the campers. This company found that it took six month to a year to achieve significant results in the trainees. They also found that the most effective coaches had at least 20 years of experience. Specific results were better relationships with direct reports (77%), bosses (71%), peers (63%), and clients (37%).

Again, apprenticeships used to be the norm. The blacksmith had his apprentice as did the carpenter. The knight had his squire. Now, quite often, we expect to create competent people after the briefest of trainings, and sometimes after just lectures and roles plays! Both history and modern best practice repeatedly demonstrate that guided training (modeling and scaffolding – see those sections) is usually necessary to improve in-the-trenches skills. Beyond all the examples noted above, let’s return to the evidence cited in this resource as further proof.

R e t u r n i n g t o T h e E v i d e n c e a t H a n d

Remember that the standard Fortune 500 leadership trainings were colossal failures. What went wrong is that they focused on transferring knowledge, spent some time on attitude, did role plays, and occasionally added some shadowing (modeling). What fixed them was implementing more in the trenches, real behavioral training using scaffolding (see that section). They also did a better job of targeting the things under the attitude heading. See the recent article from Fortune Magazine (in the appendix) that gives a short, lighthearted overview for some of these points.

Parent Effectiveness Trainings went wrong in that they targeted knowledge, some attitude, and did lots of role plays. They fixed it by using behavioral training in the parents’ homes with a coach (scaffolder). The other key involved working with parents to remove some of the structural barriers that prevented them from using what they knew. It did take a lot of time and effort, but best-practice PET programs took the benchmark from 60% effective to 95%. Also, keep in mind that PET classroom training ranges from 60-100 hours, which doesn’t include the in-the-trenches variety for parenting skills. Camps, necessarily, have far, far less training often ranging from 2-12 hours.

Looking at more camp-like programs, Outward Bound shifted their training to a more apprenticeship-like model. The one camp that doubled their effectiveness in one year did so, in part, by implementing the elements of best-practice trainings. With continuing mastery of the methods and better implementation of them, their results will likely only get better.

Playing Dice with Role Plays

Role plays (simulation training) are really good tools when done well. Jeffrey Leiken (www.mentorcounselor.com) did an excellent presentation, which discussed how to make them even more effective. In their best form, role plays are good for breaking up lecture, making learning more fun, creating “ah-ha” moments, facilitating understanding, changing attitudes, and providing pseudo practice. That’s an impressive list of benefits!

Keeping in mind all their good points, simulation trainings are also severely limited. For one, they are time consuming. The amount of knowledge that can be conveyed is reduced by the vast amount of time, relatively, most role plays take. Role plays can often enhance knowledge to a level unavailable in a more lecture-like format, but their time demands need to be kept in mind.

Another potential drawback is that role plays are often like being given a few chemical elements and then told to intuit the periodic table. As noted before in the transferring skills section, a guiding framework is essential. This is only a potential drawback as the framework can be provided, but often it isn’t.

The most significant drawback to role plays, as has been alluded to throughout this section, is that they offer an extremely small amount of practice time. Roles plays and demonstrations are camp staples, but they don’t make a competent person, let alone an expert. They are like being an actor (or audience member) in a play about being president of the United States and then saying you are ready to actually do it for real.

Furthermore, role plays and demonstrations usually only “prepare” someone for the situation modeled or something very similar to it, if appropriately debriefed/processed. Would you want a teacher for your child who role played being a teacher at a university? How about a surgeon for your heart who role played it in medical school? How about a director of a camp who role played it at the Basic Camp Directors’ Course and elsewhere?

Given all that you now know, having a counselor for the children (whose lives are supposed to be changed by your camp experience) who is primarily trained through knowledge and role plays should be cause for concern. Review the evidence under the section “Knowledge + Attitude = Dedicated Novice” again to strike home the point that role plays are

almost always insufficient practice. Only simple behavioral skills are well served through only role-play practice, and changing people's lives and behavior is not a simple skill.

Let me leave this section by reiterating that role plays are excellent tools, but when they aren't used correctly or are used as a primary teaching tool, the results will likely mirror that of the previous camps noted, standard Fortune 500 leadership trainings, and former PET training.

What is The Best Method To Behaviorally Train?

J u m p i n g W i t h A B u n g e e C o r d

Amazingly, people will stand at the edge of a bridge 100 yards above a shallow river and hurl themselves over. Of course, these people are willing to make such a harrowing leap of faith because they know that the giant rubber band attached to their legs will snatch them from the jaws of death at the very last instant. Most of the time, but not always, it works.

In the training framework, the student learns from a model/mentor. When the student feels moderately competent, the model watches the student attempt the modeled skill (jump), while the mentor remains available to step in if necessary (with a bungee cord). People are much more willing to go out on a ledge and jump off when they know there's help waiting if they need it.

When the support (bungee cord/scaffolder/coach) isn't there, the student may go splat, or they may sprout wings and have mastered the skill sufficiently to be on their own. See the "If at first you don't succeed, try, try, and then give up" section for more information about what happens when the support isn't there.

S e l f S t u d y 1 0 1

Without a consistent model and coach/scaffolder, the student must learn through the school of hard knocks and bootstrapping (pulling up your ability by yanking on your own bootstraps). While these schools can be effective, they are *rarely as quick, easy, or effective* as modeling and scaffolding, and they require an *enormous amount of attitude!* As you've already learned, attitude comes at such a high price that taxing it unnecessarily is not wise.

A model shows the student the way through the maze so that wrong turns can be avoided. Wrong turns are things like using an inappropriate method when working with children or violating some aspect of a camp's policies, procedures, or philosophy. A scaffolder or coach is right there when someone makes a wrong turn to point them back on the correct path. The model and scaffolder are there to *help prevent the pain and frustration of learning the hard way*. They are there to make *learning faster, easier, and more on target*. There is little value to making people learn the hard way (see the scaffolding and "if at first you don't succeed, try, try, and then give up" sections for explanations). Also, wrong turns and a slow pace can have enormous consequences for the camp on many levels.

All throughout training (orientation and the whole summer), making sure that models and scaffolders are available will prevent the school of hard knocks and bootstrapping from becoming necessary. Everyone will be happier and more effective, which will help make your camp an exceptional one that achieves its vision and mission.

M o d e l i n g

W h a t I s I t ?

There is no substitute for in-the-trenches experience, which is one reason camping folks like to listen to experts who have had significant camp experience. Of course, when learning almost any new skill, mistakes will be made and more knowledge must be gained along the way. To these ends, modeling and scaffolding are where orientation leaves off and training begins.

A model is someone who *expertly* demonstrates a skill. A true expert is essential – consult the "Seeing the forest for the trees" section for a discussion on this point. Ideally, although not done as often as it should be, the model would be available to process the experience through with the student afterwards. Let's look at a quick example involving a behavior management episode.

A n E x a m p l e

When a behavior problem occurs that is beyond the counselor's ability to handle, a highly competent model would be on the scene (or called to the scene). The model would engage the child (or, potentially a staff person) skillfully using the knowledge in practice. The student would watch the scene from start to finish and then the model and student would sit down to process what happened. When the student feels moderately competent (which may take several modeling episodes), the model watches the student address a behavior problem (jump), while the model remains available to step in if necessary (with a bungee cord). Stepping in would change the activity from modeling to scaffolding.

How And When It Works – The Details

Learning via modeling is not automatic. The criteria are as follows. Students must see the modeled activity “enough” for them to feel as if they are close to being able to do it themselves. How much is enough depends on (a) the difficulty of the task and (b) the student.

For the former, learning how to flip a coin is no great shakes, but learning how to handle children effectively is. ***Modeling is almost never mastering!*** It’s easier to implement a newly learned behavior management strategy on children who are minimally or moderately challenging. Throw someone a difficult kid and the diversity and depth of experience necessary to handle the situation and use the knowledge may just not be there.

On the student side of things, there must be (b₁) sufficient attitude and knowledge, and (b₂) the student must be within range of accomplishing the modeled task. Let’s look at attitude and knowledge first. For attitude, modeling isn’t going to help if it is falling upon deaf ears, so to speak. For knowledge, knowing what the model is doing (knowledge component) helps the student both understand and frame the experience – see the “Transferring skill” section.

Now let’s look at the second part (b₂). Where the student is in terms of knowledge and ability when witnessing the modeled act is crucial information. If the student is already close to mastering a skill, the model might be able to provide the last keys and example necessary for the student to be able to work on his own. If the student is new to the task or has little experience with it, modeling might take a long time to be effective. Developmental psychologists call this the “Zone of Development.” If the student is “in the zone,” modeling can help a lot, otherwise it takes a long time at best. Whether learning to swim, play professional tennis, work with children, or do calculus, the models’ success depends upon where along the continuum of expertise the student is.

Keep in mind that modeling is almost never mastering. It is the rare case when someone can become independent of their teacher with just modeling as education. Revisit the examples and research presented at the beginning of the behavior section to review the importance of this point. Modeling should always occur (and usually first), but guided practice is often the best education. Scaffolding (next section) is guided education.

Modeling Norms And Values

Although slightly outside the focus of this chapter, it is important to note that modeling definitely has an impact in setting the cultural norms and values. Bob Ditter refers to this all the time as “Parallel Process,” which means how you treat the staff is how they’re going to treat the kids. It is true that *you teach people* how to treat you, each other, the children, and the camp. When you take on that mindset, how and why things work at camp can take on a whole new light.

For modeling norms and values to work well, it often takes a majority of the people to doing it. At the outset, this includes the administrative staff and the returning counselors and staff. New folks on the block learn how to behave from the moment they start dealing with the camp. Sometimes a majority isn’t initially necessary, but it usually requires a charismatic person to make up for the lack of numbers. On a smaller scale, each group and cabin sets their own norms and values, so the modeling that happens there is key as well.

The culture resource provides invaluable insight and practical suggestions around understanding, assessing, developing, and changing camp culture.

S c a f f o l d i n g

What Is It?

It’s a strange word, so why use it? Because “coaching” is a word with such broad connotations and mixed meanings, psychological scientists came up with another word that had a more precise definition. As you’ll see, scaffolding has an intuitive and instructive meaning that clearly delineates what is necessary when one is “coaching.” In a nutshell, scaffolding is coaching by helping as little as possible in specific way to produce independence on the part of the student.

The specifics come next, but a brief analogy will be helpful first. Think of a scaffold next to a building. In order for the workers (students) to reach a higher level on the building and complete some work, they need the help of the scaffold (coach/mentor). Without the aid of the scaffold, they would be unable to reach the higher level and complete some task.

In teaching terms, the scaffolder/coach/mentor provides the help so that the student can achieve a certain goal or complete a task (work with a distressed child, become better at archery, or successfully lead children on a hike) that would be difficult or impossible without the aid. The scaffold (help) lets the student get used to performing at a higher level, so that eventually s/he will be able to do it by him/herself without the help of a scaffold(er).

The Specifics

Keeping with the rule of 7 + or – 2, there are only five things to remember here. That is key, because the scaffolder must have these five things (one principle and four tools) in mind and work with them on the fly.

The overarching principle is that limited assistance should be provided *only* when it is required. Believe it or not, people learn best when they struggle with a task just enough so that it both remains difficult and they continue to move forward. The central goal is to help *as little as possible* so that the student is learning by *doing* and *thinking*, and not by following directions. Let's return to the kid learning how to ride a bike for the first time. She may be wobbling and struggling, but as long as it's clear that she's moving forward fast enough, isn't about to wipe out, and isn't getting overly frustrated, the scaffolder/coach should just let her keep doing/learning. Yes, stepping in and providing the right amount of help at the right time is both an art and a science, but someone who is expert at a given task, and has any bent towards teaching, often has a keen sense of timing.

The four tools of a scaffolder are: define the task, have the student think it through, praise and understanding, and modifying the task so it is within the student's grasp. These will become clearer through the examples that follow, but a brief definition of each follows. *It should also be noted that learning is enhanced when the scaffolder processes the experience through with the student after the help is given.*

Define the task

Defining the task involves taking the sea of information available and pointing out which part the student should be focusing on. There is often so much to pay attention to, that students sometimes become confused as to what they should do first. It works best if the scaffolder can define the task through a Socratic process – asking questions.

Have student think it through

The newly learned knowledge in the student's head may not be sorted out enough to use it on the fly. Also, sometimes the student forgets key elements of the knowledge necessary – especially under any degree of stress. In those cases, the scaffolder helps by having the student think through the problem. Again, it works best if the scaffolder can help the student think through the problem using a Socratic process. If the student has forgotten the knowledge (or never knew it), that key to the kingdom must be in place first.

Praise and understanding

Students will get frustrated with their progress or the difficulty of the problem at hand every now and then. When that happens, the scaffolder needs to provide praise and understanding. Remember, the goal is to keep the student moving forward and learning with as little help as possible. A little reassurance and a pat on the back are minimally invasive and go a long way.

Modify task so it is within student's grasp

Sometimes it's clear that the child (student) on the bike (task at hand) is going to wipe out without direct intervention. In such cases, the scaffolder needs to step in and steady the bike or put on training wheels. Modifying the task so it is within the student's grasp is the most drastic assistance the scaffolder can provide short of turning the situation into a modeling scenario. If it is done too readily, the student might not have learned as much as s/he could have. Another possibility is that the student might become frustrated with either the scaffolder for stepping in too early, or himself for not being able to get further with the task. On the other hand, if this tool (bungee cord) is implemented too late, the student will have gone beyond their ability and hit the ground (splat). Training your scaffolders in scaffolding using all the best practices throughout this chapter is a worthwhile endeavor.

Finally, it is very important to note that these are four independent tools. The scaffolder's tasks should be viewed as a toolbox of techniques, instead of a hierarchical or ordered plan. Sometimes the situation calls for a hammer, another time a drill, or perhaps the occasion calls for a saw and a drill. All the "steps" should not necessarily be done in a lock-step manner. Each step/scaffold is built only when it is apparent that the student won't make it without the scaffold/help. When the mentor does everything, the teaching has become modeling instead of scaffolding, which is appropriate when the task is outside the student's "Zone of Development."

A Few Examples

Ideally, an expert archery (or behavior management, leadership, . . .) scaffolder would model and scaffold with new archery teachers/coaches so that they learned how to model and scaffold via best practice methods. As that relates to my teaching you about scaffolding, I'm stuck providing you with knowledge, which as we know isn't ideal. Thus, I'm hoping that either you are an expert already, or you have access to them. Finally, keep in mind that a scaffolder can only coach a student to the degree of their ability – consult the "Seeing the forest for the trees" section for a discussion on this point.

Absent from the below examples is the overarching principle: provide limited assistance only when required. Also, the scaffolder should process the experience through with the student to help make firm the new ability and make other connections in the brain (see transferring skills section).

Three fairly detailed examples follow to help drive home the key elements of scaffolding. The presentation lists a few other examples (slide 44).

| Archery | |
|---|---|
| The scaffolder's task | How that might look |
| Defines the activity/task to be accomplished | "The way you aim is good, but do you notice how the arrows seem to be in a vertical, straight line between the ground and the top of the target?" If necessary: "Take a look at your arms. What do you notice about them when you are shooting?" |
| Has the student think out loud to try and solve the problem (focus is on recalling knowledge) | "It looks like the pattern of your arrows is above and to the right of the bull's eye. What do you remember about aiming in archery?" |
| Supports the student through motivation, praise, and understanding | "This is your first time trying archery and most kids miss the target completely with the first 20 or 30 arrows. You've only shot about a dozen, so you're doing just fine." If necessary: "I know it's frustrating. Let me watch you shoot and we'll see if I can't help out a little more." |
| Modifies the skill to be learned so it is within the student's grasp | "I see that this is difficult for you. That's okay if you keep missing. The important thing is to get your form down so that you'll be able to hit the target. Let's move the target up from 20 meters to 10 and focus on your form. When you're doing better, we'll move it back out again." |

Overarching principle: provide limited assistance only when required

Process the experience through afterwards

| Behavior Management | |
|---|--|
| The scaffolder's task | How that might look |
| Defines the activity/task to be accomplished | "Which counseling method do you think would be most effective here?" "Tell me how you see this situation." |
| Has the student think out loud to try and solve the problem (focus is on recalling knowledge) | "Let's just talk out loud and summarize what is probably happening here." "Okay, good! Now let's think about what we learned about the basic needs children have. Let's try and go deeper than Suzy getting the ball or trying to win. Remember that all behavior is communication." "That sounds good, now what are the steps we should go through when talking with children?" |
| Supports the student through motivation, praise, and understanding | "This is a hard one and I would struggle to, but you're showing good effort and I know you'll be able to help her." |
| Modifies the skill to be learned so it is within the student's grasp | "Hmmm. . . she's a tough cookie. . . would it be okay if I tried to get her understand her emotions and responsibility in this situation and then let you take over from there?" |

Overarching principle: provide limited assistance only when required

Process the experience through afterwards

Training A CIT To Lead A Hike

| The scaffolder's task | How that might look |
|---|---|
| Defines the activity/task to be accomplished | "You're doing a good job of playing with the kids and keeping them entertained. But, have you noticed how spread out everyone is? Do you think that's safe?" |
| Has the student think out loud to try and solve the problem (focus is on recalling knowledge) | "So, everyone is all spread out over about 100 yards. How are we going to get everyone together again? How are we going to make sure this doesn't happen again?" |
| Supports the student through motivation, praise, and understanding | "Boy, these kids sure don't want to stay together! They're a rough group though. Plus, it's right after a candy canteen and they're wired!" |
| Modifies the skill to be learned so it is within the student's grasp | "Okay, this is getting a little dangerous now. How about this. . . I'll go up to the front and hold everyone up while you go to the back and bring everyone to me. Once we're all together, I'll start to talk about the expectations for a hike. You jump in anytime you want and then tell them our plan for how we're going to stay together." |

M a k i n g B e h a v i o r a l T r a i n i n g T h e S t a n d a r d

Let's recap. The menu of behavioral training methods includes role plays, modeling, and scaffolding. Role playing can be done during orientation and during the summer at in-service training events. Sometimes a mentor may choose to role play something one-on-one right before it actually happens. For example, the teacher may want to role play how the student is going to handle a behavior problem before they both go to the cabin and the student tries to deal with it appropriately.

Modeling and scaffolding should be happening all the time all the way down the line. The director should model and scaffold skills with the assistant director, the assistant director with the unit heads, unit heads with group leaders, group leaders with counselors, and counselors with children. In general, the expert should be modeling and scaffolding for the lesser experts all the time. Certainly, sometimes the teaching happens out of the hierarchical order. For example, the director learns something from a counselor and the counselor from a child. However, leaving behavioral training to an edict ("Hear ye! Hear ye! Everyone begin modeling and scaffolding from this point forward!") is not going to make a lot happen. Trying to make it part of the culture and modeling it everywhere possible with as many models (usually supervisors) as possible is one tactic. Beyond that approach, there must be structures in place to insure that people actually do it (see the culture resource). Camp is busy and there are a lot of competing demands and important things to be done.

Make modeling and scaffolding part of people's job description *and* have it be something on their agenda. For example, unit heads or group leaders (whoever supervises counselors) must spend two hours every day with their groups at the beginning, and one hour every two days when the counselors approach expert levels. These numbers are broad rules of thumb that will vary widely depending on the nature of the camp program. The point is to make sure that the experts spend time with their students on a regular basis.

I've learned that just sending supervisors out into their groups doesn't usually yield the best results. The task is too loosey goosey and random things happen – some good, some not so good. Thus, in the appendix you'll find guidelines for supervisors spending time in their groups. With this structure, the supervisors know what they're checking for. They already know about modeling and scaffolding and they're looking for opportunities. Their supervisors are working with them a couple hours a week to help them do a good job of this. Meal meetings (see appendix) with the counselors, the group leader, and the group leader's supervisor once or twice a week helps keep everyone on the same page and offers a point for accountability.

Another useful way to make behavioral training the standard is to have a superior returning counselor in the cabin. For this to be worth while, the returning counselor must be a true expert at supervisor level quality – consult the "Seeing the forest for the trees" section for a discussion of expertise. In the *very rare* instances where a camp is fortunate enough to have a true expert in the cabin, modeling and scaffolding can happen on a continual basis, which is extremely powerful. Make sure the expert knows that it is their job to be a model and scaffolder and have the supervisor check in with that group to make sure it is happening as desired.

A few other brief examples, which may or may not be applicable to your camp, are listed below.

- Hire past supervisor experts to come back for just the first week of camp to model and scaffold.
- Hire experts in the skill you want to transfer. For example, utilize counseling psychologists and/or social workers to come for a week (in exchange for their kids attending for free?) to do on-the-job training.
- Take less kids for a mini-session so that, temporarily, the staff ratio is such that there are plenty of experts available.
- One camp brought in enough children to have a few cabins running during orientation. They had returning staff take shifts running those cabins along with a few new counselors.

Once you've got the principles of modeling and scaffolding down, you've been taught "how to fish" and you can think of all sorts of ways to adapt these principles to your camp.

Final Behavior Caveats

In - s e r v i c e s A r e I n s u f f i c i e n t

By in-training, I mean something akin to orientation (lectures, role plays, discussions, and demonstrations) happening during the summer. Camps often rely on in-services to continually train staff. They are useful, but they can only target the knowledge and attitude components (for soft skills), not the behavioral side, which is key. As noted before simulation exercises (role plays) have numerous benefits, but they aren't good behavioral training.

O u t s o u r c e , H i r e d , C h e e e e c k !

Sometimes people fall into the trap of hiring a Bob Ditter, Michael Brandwein, Jeff Leiken, Chris Thurber, or a local trainer to cover some aspect of orientation or staff training during the summer. While varying speakers and hiring dynamic, effective trainers is an excellent idea, they can really only target the knowledge and attitude segments, and perhaps some behavioral training with role plays, experiential demonstrations, and exercises. They can also model with you how they want you to be with the children. Remember, focusing on those elements alone is what failed PET, the Fortune 500 leadership training programs, several camps, and other outdoor education programs. As the evidence marshaled throughout this resource conveys, that approach doesn't work very well in isolation. Just because you hired a star to train your staff doesn't mean they're trained.

S e e i n g T h e F o r e s t F o r T h e T r e e s

Quite often, people caught in the trees (the thick of camp) are unaware of their ineffectiveness and believe they are doing an okay if not good job. Indeed, a series of scientific (e.g., Gilovich, Kruger, & Savitsky, 1999) studies found that incompetent people are very likely to think they are doing a great job! This isn't the result of being unintelligent, but rather a lack of experience (as well as knowing what true expertise looks like) and a situation that nears or exceeds an individual's ability to cope. Egocentrism often plays a role as well.

People often don't take the step back to analyze the situation, their behavior, the children's behavior, other adult's behavior, and the ideal. Sometimes the individual is unable to take those steps and requires a mentor to scaffold the skills. Other times, the individual just needs the purposeful time (not spent meeting other needs) to think and reflect. Trainings themselves are sometimes to blame as frequently the effect is increased self-confidence and enthusiasm (Boyatzis, 1993), which don't necessarily go along with actual skill and ability. Thus, it is very important for trained (and *truly* skilled) mentors/supervisors to monitor the performance of people recently trained.

To throw in a quick, extreme anecdote to drive home the point, I have seen supervisors at several camps with two or more summers of experience, degrees in social work or related field, ACA conference experience, and who actually conducted trainings on behavior management consistently fail to use that knowledge and be effective. Such instances are rare, but they do exist. The appendices in the culture resource are very instructive in their examples and principles as well.

All this may seem like common sense to you, but there is one more corollary of which to be aware. It is unlikely that any individual (including supervisors and the director) possesses the full portfolio of skills necessary, or that they operate at peak efficiency all the time. Thus, a system of checks and balances and a culture where asking for help (especially by supervisors *and* the director) is encouraged is necessary. See the "Art and science of making mistakes" resource.

I f A t F i r s t Y o u D o n ' t S u c c e e d , T r y , T r y , A n d T h e n G i v e U p

Complicated behaviors aren't mastered overnight. If a staff member is faced with a situation where they need their knowledge and they have the attitude/inclination to use it, they'll likely give it a try. If it doesn't work for them, they may try it again a couple or even a few times.

After that, they will likely give up and resort to their experience over knowledge, which will likely hamper or eliminate your ability to achieve your mission! It is extremely important to have trainers/supervisors available to monitor the staff and see how they're doing. After the staff person has already largely given up (gone splat), it is an uphill battle to try and have them resort back to something with which they've experienced failure.

The Billion Dollar Mistake

The Billion Dollar Mistake (Alliger, 1989; Goleman, 1998; & Tracey, 1995) refers to what Fortune 500 companies have learned the hard (and expensive) way – soft skills are extremely difficult to train and large improvements are rare. The recent book “Now, Discover Your Strengths” (Buckingham, 2001) is another redress of this issue. Having staff follow a prescribed program and be competent to teach activities (hard skills) is usually done well. Training evaluations and best practice studies reveal that hard skills are relatively easy to train (Goleman, 1998). It's the softer skills that lead to the social and personal outcomes at camp that are so difficult to train and find in young adults (Ballou, 1997; Buckingham & Clifton, 2001; Goleman, 1998). There are two things to do with this knowledge: a) hire the best staff you can, and b) utilize best practice training methods so that you can boost the skills of the staff you hire.

Camps often feel they hire just such an exceptional staff, but if that were true and commonplace, we would not witness the alarming rate at which large organizations, parent trainings, and camps have not met their objectives despite taking care hiring their staff. Keep in mind that years of experience playing tennis or teaching school does not necessarily make a great tennis player or a master teacher, and this is even more true for softer skills. Utilizing best practice hiring methods (Bob Ditter has adapted these for camps), the quality of staff will likely be better. The enculturation section of the culture resource has very valuable hiring information as well. Even so, as noted in the “Why am I telling you this” section, *even exceptional college students rarely have the skills necessary. They haven't had the time and experience to hone their behavioral ability – witness the long time it takes the apprentice method prevalent in professional trainings today to work.*

The cost for the Fortune 500 companies was estimated to be a billion dollars due to poor hiring (hiring for hard skills and hoping the soft ones could be trained) and attempting to train people not fully utilizing best practice methods. The cost for camps is falling short of the abilities and performance necessary to be an effective part of the intervention. The campers aren't served as they should be or need to be. Competent people who are able to fully perform their roles as they must cover for those who can't (see organizational factors chapter). Furthermore, the pool of appropriate staff available to return for another summer is diminished.

The point I'm trying to make here is that, yes, hire the best staff you can possibly manage, but don't think that that Herculean task coupled with a standard camp training model will get you very far. Combining best practice hiring methods with the staff training best practices discussed throughout this resource will enable your camp to change lives and enrich the world like never before.

Conclusion

Next time you go to a training or give one, think about how it targets the knowledge, attitude, and behavioral components. With such a comprehensive lens, you'll be able to boost your training's effectiveness and ultimately the outcomes your campers and staff experience. Staff are the means of treatment. They carry out the intervention that is the summer camp experience. Giving them the skills necessary so that their behavior is instrumental in changing the lives of campers is essential, fundamental, and vital (which means life; to give life to the camp program). I hope you found a nugget or two here. If you knew them all, ask yourself how well they are all implemented.

In the end, this resource is just some knowledge. Did it change your attitude? Will it change your behavior? I don't know, but I hope the answer is yes to both questions.

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Other Vision Realization Resources

See www.visionrealization.com for even more resources

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Adult learning principles | A general list of principles to keep in mind when training adults is provided. An excellent checklist for trainers to study is also included. |
| Behavior management | This resource is a comprehensive behavior management plan that is firmly rooted in developmental and counseling psychology. Elements of plans that work and don't, bases of power, 5 approaches to counseling, parenting styles, and a full description of a systematic plan for working with children are all included. |
| Believing and doubting game | This is a useful "game" to play when you are having almost any kind of controversial discussion, or are trying to increase creativity. Place the one-page description in front of everyone at the meeting, allow everyone to read it, and get ready to have a more open, creative, and, ultimately more productive discussion/meeting. |
| Emotional intelligence | Brief information on what Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is, why it is so important, and how to develop it in presentation format. Also includes information on how to measure EQ in a valid and reliable way. Audio annotation is included. |
| The learning camp | The book "The Fifth Discipline" made this concept popular, but a lot has happened in the decade since that research was done. There are eight pillars of a learning organization. Understand what they are and how to assess where you stand on each pillar by using an administrator and counselor survey - provided. |
| Orientation story | Staff sometimes start orientation with the idea that they already know what you have to tell them. This little story/demonstration will illustrate the idea that they need to be open minded. |
| Organizational culture at camps | From a fuzzy and nebulous concept to a concrete, useful framework. Understand clearly what makes a camp culture and how far reaching it is. Determine how yours rates. Discover best practices in creating an exceptional culture. Learn how to develop or change your current culture without hitting the land mines. Understand why Bob Ditter called this approach "the next level" in camp performance. |
| Organizational factors | The topics presented here are definitely considered by camps, and often agonized about at length. The goal is to hopefully offer a nugget or two of new information, or new lines of thought. Addressed are camper return rates and session length, staff return rates, appropriate staffing levels, and staff quality. |
| Process maps | Utilizing this knowledge will help you understand and communicate what your camp does in an unprecedented way. The staff and campers will benefit enormously from this knowledge. View this slide show with audio annotations and reach a new plateau of understanding and effectiveness. This is not just about "evaluation." |
| Staff motivation | This resource is a thorough overview of the factors responsible for a motivated staff. Addressed are: the role of stories, speeches, and pep talks; staff quality; staff quantity; pay; camp culture; performance reviews; discipline; empowering staff; providing value to your staff; vision and mission; praise and recognition; setting expectations; and perks and benefits. Understand how to "get more from your staff without even asking." |
| The art and science of mistakes | Directors, staff, and campers all make plenty of slip-ups. Learn the differences between mistakes and failure and how to find the humor and wisdom in life's disappointments. Teach children, staff, and your organization how to "fail forward." There isn't a single aspect of organizations or personal life this doesn't apply to! |

Supervisor in Group Guidelines

Think about ways this could work well for each supervisor's style and for the camp in the future. Change? Adapt?

Guidelines to consider

- Each supervisor spends one hour a day modeling and scaffolding with each of their groups
- Scheduling
 - If the group is functioning very well, plan it so that someone can get time off, or so that you are providing a special perk. However, in that case, your role will be more of a doer instead of an observer (forest thinking) and coach.
 - Choose several parts of the day so that you can see how the group is functioning at different times – e.g., powwow/evening program, waking up, siesta/rest hour, meal time, cabin time, swimming and showering, bed time or embers, community service project, et cetera.

C.A.S.P.P

Check in with the counselors to get updated on the group and the counselors

- Reemphasize that you are, "Here to support, help, and teach." It's not a judge and catch you doing something wrong time.
- Ask if they would like you to play some kind of role during your time together

Assess (forest thinking)

- Leadership styles (e.g., telling, selling, consulting, joining, etc.)
- Roles of children (and counselors) in group (e.g., scapegoat, negative/positive leaders, clown, woodwork, etc.)
- Group stage (e.g., storming, norming, performing, reforming, etc.) of children *and* counselors
- Challenging and *non*-challenging children and how the plan for their development is working (or, develop framework for a plan and discuss at next opportunity with counselors)
- How well counselor is adhering to the letter and principles of the program (buy in and knowledge of philosophy & processes)
- Counselor
 - Their stress, happiness, and general mood
 - Effectiveness at behavior management
 - Ability to play, be safe, and attend to the needs of the children
 - General effectiveness as a model and scaffolder

Model and Scaffold

- Step in only upon invitation, or serious physical or emotional safety problem – don't usurp or upstage the counselors' power if at all possible!
- Help as little as possible so that the counselor is learning by doing and thinking, and not by following directions
- See full descriptions in the scaffolding and modeling sections

Provide Feedback If Possible

- Pick the time. During a meal or when the counselor(s) can be pulled away from the group. Quick, immediate feedback can also work well, but it may be easier to hear feedback and discuss things at length away from the immediate situation.
- Strengths – tell them what they're doing well. Always start and end with this. TIPS – True, Immediate, Positive, Specific.
- Weaknesses/opportunities/challenges/growth potential/professional development
 - Recognize: Situation, emotions, their intentions, and focus on ends while talking of means.
 - Failure to follow the 5-step model (SEIEM) will decrease odds of positive change and positive interaction with any adult or child in almost any environment

Process the Experience

- Make notes about points that should be followed up on during a mealtime meeting or elsewhere
- How could the next time period be better for everyone concerned – increase value to group and camp

Meal Meetings

Many camps use the meal times as a chance for groups (unit head, group leader, and counselors – three levels) to meet once or twice a week. They usually sit at a separate table or eat outside the dining area, so they can have some privacy and focus. The agenda for these meetings might look something like the below.

1. Start off sharing specific successes since you last met (staff sharing and supervisor observed)
2. Check on each child's progress and notes kept on each child
3. Strategize how to help each child get the most from the experience
4. Check in on the counseling working team
5. Share important camp information
6. Strategize ways the supervisor could be more helpful next time they are with their group.
 Ask for feedback on supervisor's last visit or two
7. Facilitate brief discussion on how group (children and counselors) is meeting their goals and objectives (positive ending)
8. If there are other counseling or child problems, set up additional meetings

Mystified by training? Here are some clues.

"It's a mystery." With those words, various characters in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* explain how brilliant plays are produced. As an explanation, "It's a mystery" lacks a certain, how shall we say, rigor. You wouldn't expect it to survive the scrutiny of most CFOs, for example.

Yet it is the answer to many questions about training. How much do you spend? "It's a mystery." Training costs are scattered among so many budgets that no one, probably, could ever find them to add them up. General Electric counts costs as well as anyone, but I once got a figure for total training expenditures with the caveat, "This is plus or minus \$100 million."

And what do you get for your money? "It's a mystery." The Conference Board says more than half of all companies don't even try to measure the value of training, and fewer still calculate the return in monetary terms. This is true even of sales training, which would seem easy to measure -- did sales go up after training? Just 11% of companies attempt to measure the correlation between training and sales.

It doesn't have to be so mysterious. There are known ways to make training more effective. For instance:

Emphasize action learning. Classroom training is inefficient. Half the people in the room are secretly working on their "real" jobs; half are so relieved not to be doing their real jobs, they've turned their minds entirely off. Half already know half the stuff being taught and are playing Buzzword Bingo on their Palms; half will never need to know more than half of it.

Action learning -- learning by means of carefully planned real-world projects -- has several advantages. First, it works. Second, while people are learning, they're doing real work for the company -- so there's an immediate return on investment. Third, it builds social networks. Ask any GE person about the value of attending Crotonville, the company's fabled leadership institute. The answer is always: "The people I met were more important than the courses I took."

Action is the key to action learning, says consultant Ram Charan, who helped design GE's practice. Budding executives might be sent off in teams to solve real business problems -- doing market research about opportunities for GE Medical Systems in Eastern Europe or studying power generation in South Korea, for example -- with a bit of classroom instruction thrown in. Pure course work is rare. Charan says the projects must be real ones, not hypothetical; they should be important, not Tinker Toys; and the company must visibly support learning by implementing a team's recommendations rather than leaving them on a shelf next to long-forgotten strategic plans. Taking action creates a fourth benefit: It calls top management's attention to rising stars. Good grades, however searching the tests or superb the school, cannot forge, anneal, or polish talent the way life can.

Build informal learning into the work. People learn more from informal on-the-job training than from classroom instruction. The Center for Workforce Development estimates that U.S. companies spend between \$30 billion and \$50 billion a year on formal training, but that 70% of all workplace learning is actually informal. This shouldn't be a surprise. Apprenticeship was a proven way to learn long before the training industry appeared to professionalize it and bollix it up.

Classroom learning, textbooks, and off-sites do have their place. They're great for giving people an overview of their work and why it's important. They're much less effective in the workaday environment, when you often don't know what you need to know until you need to know it. That's when informal training comes into its own. It is just-in-time learning. The return on investment is immediate for both employer and employee, and it boosts morale and aids retention. A workplace full of people seeking and giving help becomes a wellspring of ideas for continuous improvement.

Formal training can also be just-in-time by making courses available online, when they're necessary. Dell University, the training arm of the computer maker, adapts the company's business model for its own use, on the theory that education, like computer parts, should not be held in inventory but delivered when needed.

Focus on key skills. A company's training should emphasize what differentiates it from its competitors. Ordinary skills and ordinary employees don't. Insofar as generic training is worthwhile -- and you probably do need to train people in the basics of computing, safety, communications, business, English, etc -- buy it off the shelf from trade associations, community colleges, or other outside providers. Focus the pricier, company-specific training on developing your most important skills (whether they're "hard" technical skills or "soft" ones like teamwork) and your most valuable employees, who'll become your future leaders. Often training is inverse to rank: The higher you get, the less you learn. That's a mystery indeed.