Communication Training as Perceived by Training Personnel in Orlando, 1986

1987

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COMMUNICATION TRAINING AS PERCEIVED BY TRAINING PERSONNEL IN ORLANDO, 1986

BY

KIMBERLY C. FLEMING
B. S., Old Dominion University, 1982

THESIS
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Communication in the Graduate Studies Program of the College of Arts and Sciences University of Central Florida Orlando, Florida

Spring Term 1987
DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to four very special people in my life.
To my father, for his faith and belief in me during the times when I almost gave up.
To my mother, for her love and support.
To my sister, Beth, for her encouraging phone calls.
And to my friend, and former boss, Chuck Whiting. His intellect, originality, and motivational talks provided me with the challenge to finish.
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to recognize those special people who have helped me in reaching my goal for this thesis. Dr. Jeff Butler, for his encouragement, guidance and positive attitude. Julia Wildman-Pepe for coming to the rescue when I needed a statistician. To my fellow co-workers, Sandy Mathis, Rod Waddell and Cindy Hasenau—-they never stopped believing I could "Do It." And a special thanks to my dear friends who stood by me through it all (including survey stuffing parties); Missy Clark, Joanne Sikora, Tonya Elmore, Patty Watson, Diane Potchen and the Graves family.
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INTRODUCTION

The field of training and development has experienced considerable growth and change over the past decade. Some contributing factors include the shift from a largely industrial economy to a service economy (Naisbitt, 1982), the human relations and job enrichment movements (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982) and continual introduction of new technology. This large increase in training activity over the years has been coupled with equally large increases in training expenditures (Cuccarese, 1986). In a 1984 article, the Training and Development Journal estimated government spending at $274 million per year (Packer, 1984). In 1986, the journal estimated the private sector was spending $5 billion annually (Carnevale, 1986). It is apparent that companies are willing to invest dollars in the development of their employees.

With the growing recognition of the importance of training to business, "communication" has also become a buzz word in commercial, governmental and industrial organizations. Executives, managers and employees alike have come to realize the important role of communication in maintaining the everyday operations of a professional organization (Wolvin et al., 1980).

Additionally, in today's society, the role of communication is important to businesses that are expanding and growing. Specifically, growth adds to the corporations' problems, making
it more difficult to effectively communicate everyday decisions down the line. "Furthermore, the problem of effective communication may be the single most important problem the organization faces because effective communication is the sine non quo (essential thing) of an organization" (Wasylik et al., 1976).

Understanding the importance of communication to business, it is little wonder that companies are placing communication training as a high priority.

Managers, concerned with analyzing communication problems, are devising strategies for solving those problems through management consultants, new procedures or through training programs. As a result, the growing field of training and development reflects this concern with an increasing number of workshops devoted to improving communication skills (Wolvin et al., 1980).
BACKGROUND

Over the past 30 years, research has provided insightful information on the importance of good communication in organizations. Lull et al. (1955) surveyed 51 presidents of America's largest corporations and asked them to express their viewpoints on the importance of communication in their companies. The results of the study indicated that his subjects perceived the following: there is a relationship between communication and productivity; the ability to communicate is a combination of natural talent and skill that may be developed through training; and all levels of management should receive training in methods of communication.

In 1978, Dr. Harold Smith of Brigham Young University surveyed members of the Academy of Certified Administrative Managers to determine 20 competencies crucial to their jobs. Each of the 20 was then rated by 457 members of the academy as either super critical, highly critical or critical (Smith, 1978). The four rated as super critical were all related to communicating and working with people. They were also considered more important than expertise in the manager's fields. Furthermore, the number one cited critical communication skill was listening.
The importance of good communication skills was also cited in a 1980 survey of presidents of Fortune 1000 companies. They examined the most anxiety-producing job situations for top-level managers. Survey findings indicated failure of employees to accept or carry out responsibilities and failure to get critical information were the first two choices. Both imply communication problems caused by poor listening habits (Mundale, 1980).

Effective communication skills have also been cited as basic to managerial ability. Lull et al., for example, stressed the importance of oral communication.

The effectiveness of management personnel depends a great deal upon ability in oral communication. Such ability plays an important role in the selection of management people for new and better opportunities. (Lull et al., 1955).

More recent research also emphasizes the importance of communication skills. Thomas and Soreno (1980) sought to identify the competencies considered most important for management personnel in various industries. Their survey research found communication skills to be the most needed competency. They believed once competencies were identified, training programs could then be developed to meet the needs of the organization.

Along the same line, researchers from New Mexico State University developed a six-part survey which investigated managers' relations with the organization, management skills needed at each level of management and typical management problems. Responses were received from 180 firm managers. The results indicated
communication ability was the most important subject to be included in a management training program. First-line supervisors placed leadership training first and communication training second in importance for new managers (Jones, 1980). Both studies clearly indicate the need for communication skills to be taught in management training programs.

In 1978, Frank Hunsicker surveyed successful managers from the United States Air Force. His study focused on broadening the list of skills needed for successful management. The importance of basic communication skills clearly dominated his findings. Hunsicker concluded the need for public and private school systems to develop communication based curriculums to help prepare people to become better managers. "If colleges and accredited agencies would only review their role in this process and act accordingly, the quality of the skills they impart to management could be greatly improved" (p. 621)

In summary, previous research suggests the emergence of a general pattern demonstrating the importance of communication skills in business and management.

Because of the importance of communication skills in the business setting, a number of speech communication researchers have analyzed the communication skills that are used and required by students entering the business world.

In a 1972 Speech Communication Association Summer Conference, Kennicott and Schuelke suggested educators identify what communication skills are necessary in various careers and then
develop courses which teach those skills. For many students this means equipping them with communication competencies which are beneficial and meaningful for functioning in business and industry. In the 1980s, with the awareness of the necessity of communication and human relations movement, students must have specific communication training for effective on-the-job performance.

A variety of researchers in speech communication have tried to adapt college speech communication instruction to on-the-job career needs of students (Lampton, 1973; Vogel, 1975; Wolvin & Wolvin, 1975). For the most part, current college training in communication does not meet the needs or reflect the practices of business (Clark, 1968; Rainey, 1972; LeNoir, 1975). The problem stems from not knowing precisely what communication competencies employers in corporate settings require of their employees. Since employers set criterion for job performance, hiring, promotion and firing, the perceptions of employers regarding the importance of specific communication skills would be valuable information to speech communication instructors trying to meet the business communication needs of students. These needs cannot be met until employers' standards are known.

Belohlov et al. (1974) surveyed executives in 250 of the largest businesses in the United States private sector. They asked the respondents 16 questions regarding expectations of a graduate business communication course. They asked very general questions such as, "Do communication skills count for anything
when you hire an employee?" The data was insightful, but failed to yield much in specific information about the importance of skills needed on the job.

Several researchers analyzed the importance of communication to job performance in businesses. Wolvin et al. (1980), DiSalvo et al. (1976) and Kaplan (1979) were able to conclude from their data an emerging pattern of communication skills used in daily organizational activities as well as those skills necessary for job success. The pattern included: listening, advising, routine information exchange, persuading, small group problem solving, public speaking skills, interpersonal skills, group communication, communication channels and feedback systems.

Finally, Jim Crocker in 1979 mailed a questionnaire to a random sample of personnel directors in the Greater Cincinnati Metropolitan area. The personnel director was chosen to receive the questionnaire because it was believed that this would be the person in the organization to know what skills his/her company was seeking for potential employees. The purpose of Crocker's study was to determine which communication skills employers feel are important for employees. In addition, a section in Crocker's survey asked employers to rank interviewing, public speaking, group discussion, listening, writing, reading and nonverbal communication in order of importance on the job. This section was included to replicate part of the work done by Wasylik et al. in 1976 (Crocker, 1979).
Wasylik's study (1976) had a two-fold purpose: (a) to quantify the nature and extent of organizations' communication training programs; and (b) to present such data collected from those individuals who actually conduct training. His study was an extension of earlier studies dealing with in-house communication training. Earlier studies, such as those conducted by Knapp (1969) and Hicks (1955), were primarily concerned with public speaking training. Wasylik et al. expanded upon public speaking and included other forms of communication training such as interviewing, listening and group discussion. As previously mentioned, a section of Crocker's and Wasylik's results agree on the order of importance of these communication skills. Clearly, listening was ranked first followed by writing. According to these researchers' results, both appear to be important communication skills on the job and in business.

In Wasylik's 1976 study, trainers perceived increased production as a more important goal for communication training than improved human relations. Wasylik felt this finding was a function of the economic condition of the 1970s:

At the time our questionnaires were completed, the industrial community was facing hard times. Unemployment was high, wholesale and retail price indices were rising and production in many industries had curtailed. Under such economic conditions it is little wonder that increased production would be a more important objective than improved human relations. Perhaps under better economic conditions, our sample of trainers would have perceived production concerns secondary to people concerns. (Wasylik et al., 1976)
If Wayslik's speculation that economic conditions would influence training priorities is correct, then it is unlikely that survey results from the Central Florida market would be similar to the findings of his 1976 Pittsburgh study.

In conducting this study in the Central Florida market in 1986, there are different national and local economic conditions. For example, in 1976 the country was faced with high unemployment and high inflation. The Pittsburgh labor force ten years ago was primarily blue collar, unionized and employed by manufacturing and steel industries. In 1986, the Orlando workforce was chiefly white collar and employed by service-oriented businesses. Additionally, national economic factors have changed in this decade. Specifically, inflation, prime interest rates and unemployment are lower; retail and commercial profits are higher than in 1976. At the same time, social scientists are theorizing the change from a manufacturing economy to a service economy, in which relationships are more important than physical products (Albrect & Zemke, 1985). Consequently, conclusions from past research (the Wasylik study in particular) cannot be generalized to Central Florida because of different economic, social and geographic differences.

Secondly, previous research has failed to determine who evaluates and selects employees for communication training.

Evaluation methods to assess the impact or change communication training programs had on the individual can be the sole responsibility
of employees, supervisors or management. Different companies vary in their follow-up methods for communication training programs. Some companies allow trainees to apply techniques and skills back on the job and adapt them to their own unique opportunities for communication. Therefore, training and development departments would distribute a delayed evaluation two to four months after the course is completed. This can be helpful feedback for the trainer, as well as the training department, to assure responsiveness to employee needs.

An alternative is administering an evaluation at the end of each course. For this, a trainer can use a trainee reaction sheet or ask the trainees to give oral evaluations after completion of the training program. This often can produce useful comments and observations that can help a trainer revise his or her course for maximum learning. However, Craig (1978) says, "This immediate evaluation can often produce trainee reactions to the pleasingness of the course rather than to its skill-building value." In summary, different organizations utilize different methods of evaluation. Overall, it is the decision of each company to decide who and what procedure will be utilized in evaluating communication training programs.

The previous information illustrates evaluative methods conducted by training departments. Some companies do not have formal evaluative processes for their employees, some are small enough to require the Vice Presidents and above to evaluate the effectiveness of training programs. Unfortunately, current research
has failed to determine who evaluates the impact and/or change of communication training programs in Central Florida businesses.

The nomination and selection process for training programs can be the responsibility of employees, supervisors, management or training departments. Tracey (1984) stated, "Unquestionably, the best source of information about employees is their immediate supervisors." There again, this process will vary with individual companies. In some organizations, the nomination process could be the responsibility of the employee entirely or it could be the responsibility of the supervisor, manager, employee or Vice President. It is up to the company to decide what nomination process best fits its needs. The important selection consideration is to recognize employees who have demonstrated a need for additional training or who have shown potential for higher-rated jobs. Unfortunately, contemporary research has not isolated who characteristically selects participants for training in their companies.

Tracey and Craig identified preferences in who should evaluate and nominate employees for training programs. Consequently, in the current study's second justification, there is no attempt to identify a "best" evaluation or nomination technique rather to determine the multiple methods being utilized in the Central Florida market.

Additionally, the present study attempts to expand Wasylik's research by including a broad sample. Wasylik et al. selected only in-house trainers within the Pittsburgh Chapter of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) population to survey.
This research project surveyed the entire Central Florida ASTD membership which consists of consultants, counselors and educators, as well as in-house trainers. This broader population will strengthen the input by receiving information from various sources not included in the Pittsburgh study.

A major finding of Wasylik's 1976 study was trainers perceiving increased production as a more important objective than communication training research that has examined a task-oriented industry such as military and government, to compare against service and manufacturing occupational groups. The current study added a military/government response to the occupational question (see question B).

In summary, the current study contributes to communication research by focusing on communication training attitudes in Central Florida. Second, it attempts to determine who evaluates and selects communication training in the Central Florida market. Thirdly, the present study attempted to investigate a broad sample which includes consultants and educators, as well as in-house trainers. Finally, this study addressed an area previously uninvestigated by communication researchers by polling a task-oriented industry (military/government) and comparing its communication training goals against other industries (service, manufacturing and production).

**Purpose**

Unlike other studies which surveyed in-house trainers (Wasylik, 1976), the present study used a broad sample of
consultants, educators and in-house trainers. In order to accomplish this the current study focused on the following questions. First, what is the nature and extent of contemporary in-house communication training? Second, who evaluates communication training? Third, who selects communication training? Finally, do those in military/government occupational groups perceive productivity as a more important goal for communication training than improved human relations?
METHODOLOGY

Data was obtained from questionnaires mailed to members of the Central Florida Chapter of the American Society for Training and Development.

A total of 363 surveys were mailed. Members of the sample population were involved in various aspects of organizational training ranging from in-house trainers to professional consultants. Consequently, the questionnaires obtained information from individuals at all levels of training and development.

The sample of 363 trainers represented a total of 135 different corporations. The reason the sample size exceeds the number of different companies is that large corporations often have decentralized training departments, each of which may have its own training staff. Therefore, the responses from trainers in each division were treated independently.

A survey appropriate for data collection via mail was utilized. It was designed to take no more than 10 minutes to complete and the respondents were asked to mail it back as soon as possible.

The questionnaire consisted of three pages. It contained two sections and 18 questions. Six of the questions related to demographic characteristics, and the remaining 12 questions focused
on real issues related to communication training. These latter questions were designed to elicit data relative to: (a) The perceived importance of various communication skills; (b) The types of skills being taught, (c) The target groups receiving training, (d) The goals of such training: (e) The attitudes of training personnel towards communication training, (f) Who selects participants for training and, (g) Who evaluates the impact of training.

A cover letter was drafted explaining the purpose of the survey, giving the necessary instructions and urging participation in the project.

The cover letter, self-addressed stamped envelope and questionnaire were then mailed to the subjects. The surveys were sent out in one batch and 55% were returned. Two weeks later, a follow-up method was used to increase the number of responses, yielding an additional 13% return rate.
RESULTS

Of the 363 questionnaires mailed, 248 were returned. This figure represents a 68% response rate. Nine of the returned questionnaires contained incomplete responses and were not included in the sample. Therefore, the final sample contained 239 questionnaires.

The first six questions on the survey were designed to provide data relative to the sample characteristics both in terms of individual respondents and their companies. As mentioned earlier, one of the objectives was to collect data from a sample of individuals who are involved in, or have an awareness of, organizational training.

Responses to the first six questions may be summarized as follows: the typical respondent was female (65.7%), from a corporation employing over 1,000 persons (33.9%), with a Master's Degree (45.2%). The majority of respondents conducted training in profit or non-profit service-oriented industries (78.3%) and had an average of 7.5 years experience in training. More than half (65.7%) were not involved in training prior to their current position.

In addition to demographic data, the survey addressed several training-related issues. The first question attempted to
determine how respondents ranked seven communication skills including interviewing, public speaking, group discussion, listening, writing, reading and non-verbal communication. The results of question one are summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1
COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND THEIR MEAN IMPORTANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNICATION SKILLS</th>
<th>MEAN RANK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Discussion</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewing</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Verbal Ability</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean ranks indicate that listening was perceived as the most important communication skill followed by writing, group discussion, interviewing, reading and speaking. Non-verbal ability was ranked as least important.

The second question attempted to determine the percentage of respondents who offered training in the communication skills listed in Question 1. Table 2 illustrates the responses to the second question.
TABLE 2

% AND # OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS OFFERED IN TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SKILLS</th>
<th># OF RESPONDENTS OFFERING TRAINING IN SKILL</th>
<th>% OF RESPONDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>61.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewing</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>57.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-verbal Ability</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Discussion</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of the first two questions indicated that there was a parallel between the responses to questions one and two. Apparently, training personnel offer communication training in those areas perceived as most important in their companies. For example, listening received the highest mean importance ranking for question one and the highest percentage of respondents offered training in this area. At the other end of the continuum, reading and speaking received lower mean importance rankings, and a lower percentage of respondents offered training in those skills.

The third question requested respondents to estimate the percentage of employees that receive communication training in their organizations. As reflected in Table 3, responses indicated
that 33.1% of the sample reported 0-20% of employees receiving training, 22.6% reported 21-40% received training, 20.1% reported 81-100% received training, 11.7% reported 61-80% received training, and 10% reported 41-60% received training.

**TABLE 3**

**% OF EMPLOYEES RECEIVING COMMUNICATION TRAINING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AMOUNT</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>% OF RESPONDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 20%</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21- 40%</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41- 60%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61- 80%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81-100%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses indicated that 40% of the respondents employees receive communication training.

The fourth question attempted to determine which employees received training. Specifically, the respondents were asked to check those who received communication training in their companies. As reflected in Table 4, the three groups with the highest number of respondents offering training were employees, supervisors, managers and upper level managers (22.2%), employees, supervisors and managers (17.6%) and employees and supervisors (13%).
TABLE 4
TARGET GROUPS RECEIVING COMMUNICATION TRAINING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMPLOYEE TARGET GROUPS</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employee, supervisor, management and above</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee, supervisor and manager</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee and supervisor</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question five was designed to elicit respondents' perceptions of the importance of communication training. Answers to this question were scored along a five-point response continuum ranging from very important to very unimportant. Table 5 reflects the number of ASTD members selecting each alternative.

TABLE 5
IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION TRAINING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>% OF RESPONDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>66.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very unimportant</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unimportant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These data indicate the perceived importance of communication training to training personnel. Specifically, 96.2% of the respondents reported that training was either important or very important and only 1.7% felt that it was unimportant.

The sixth question attempted to elicit data concerning the goals of communication training. Respondents were asked to prioritize four goals in terms of their importance for the organization. The most important goal was assigned the rank of 1 and the least important was assigned the rank of 5. The four goals and their mean ranks are reported in Table 6.

**TABLE 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNICATION TRAINING GOALS</th>
<th>MEAN RANK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate the exchange of ideas and/or information</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase productivity</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate human relations on the job</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce interpersonal and intergroup conflict</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data indicates that the facilitation of the exchange of ideas and/or information and increased productivity were perceived as more important to their companies than the climate in which these goals are accomplished. More specifically, getting the
task done appears to be more important to our training personnel than the atmosphere in which the job was completed.

The seventh question attempted to identify major barriers and obstacles to implementing communication training. The respondents were asked to check the appropriate barriers that influence communication training. The results are reported in Table 7.

**TABLE 7**

**COMMUNICATION TRAINING BARRIERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BARRIER</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of awareness by management of the existence of a communication problem</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of continuous reinforcement of program objectives</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of interest in solving problems when recognized</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of sufficient funds</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of interest in lower level employees in the program</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These data indicate lack of awareness of management of the existence of a communication problem (54.8%) as the major barrier in implementing communication training followed by a lack of time (51.9%), lack of reinforcement of program objectives
(34.7%), lack of interest (34.7%), lack of sufficient funds (28.9%), and lack of interest in lower level employees (18%).

Question eight was developed for the purpose of investigating organizational development impact on companies. Specifically, this was a close-ended question asking if the respondent currently offers team building and corporate climate programs. More than half (58.6%) responded no and 38.9% responded yes; 2.5% did not respond.

The ninth question was designed to evaluate attitudes toward various statements related to communication training. The respondents were asked to check a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The statements and their respective responses are summarized in Table 8.
### TABLE 8
COMMUNICATION TRAINING ATTITUDES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTITUDE ITEM</th>
<th># OF RESPONDENTS CHOOSING STRONGLY AGREE</th>
<th>% OF RESPONDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is a combination of natural talent and skill that may be developed by training and experience</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>67.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is a skill that can be learned</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is an ability that nearly all top managers possess</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can never be developed by some people because of personality traits</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is primarily a natural gift or talent</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is best developed by years of experience on the job</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is closely related to the amount of formal education a person has had</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of the above data indicated more than half of the respondents (67.8%) strongly agree that communication is a combination of natural talent and skill that may be developed by training and experience. This sample also felt that communication is a skill that can be learned (61.1%).
The tenth question was designed to elicit perceptions of companies' attitude toward communication training today as opposed to ten years ago. The three choices and their related responses are summarized in Table 9.

### TABLE 9

**RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR COMPANIES' ATTITUDES TOWARD COMMUNICATION TRAINING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More concerned today</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less concerned today</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data indicated that communication training is considered an important part of modern business.

The eleventh question produced information related to the selection process for communication training. The question asked respondents "Who selects participants for communication training?" The frequency count and percentage for each response are summarized in Table 10.
According to these results, managers nominate their employees for communication training programs (32.6%) followed by supervisors (12.6%) and employee (10%).

The last question was designed to derive information on who evaluates training. Specifically, this question asked respondents who evaluates impact/change of communication training? The five choices and their related replies are summarized in Table 11.
TABLE 11
PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR COMMUNICATION TRAINING EVALUATION PROCEDURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and Development</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The preceding information indicates higher responses in the other category. Content analysis of this response indicated that many companies do not have a formal evaluation process.

The following section presents results from a Mann Whitney-U-Wilcoxon statistical procedure used to answer the fourth research question in this study. Does the military/government in comparison to service-oriented and manufacturing/production industries perceive productivity as a more important objective for communication training than improved human relations?

This is a two sample nonparamatric test which does not assume anything about the distribution of the answers before the test is run. This procedure was used because it looks at mean rankings. It was appropriate to use for questionnaire item F because the respondents are asked to rank order the goals of
communication training in order of importance (1, most important and 5, least important) (Cody & Smith, 1985, p. 126).

One significant relationship was found between the service (profit) and military/government occupational group (p<.03). The military/government respondents consistently ranked the goal of reducing interpersonal and intergroup conflict higher than the service industry. The results are summarized in Table 12.

TABLE 12
MANN WHITNEY-U-WILCOXON RANK SUM FINDINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MEAN RANK</th>
<th>CASES (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service (profit)</td>
<td>89.06</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military/Government</td>
<td>68.90</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, the findings indicate the military/government business sector perceived human relations as an important goal of communication training.

The last section presents results from a follow-up Chi Square test used to identify differences between occupational groups and all survey questions.

Chi Square results indicated a significant relationship between educational background and occupational group (p<.001). The results are summarized in Table 13.
According to these results, the percentages indicate an educated sample. Specifically, 12% have Doctoral Degrees, 45% have Masters Degrees, 29% have four years of college, and 12% have a high school education (2% did not answer this question).

Additionally, the military/government sector reported more Masters Degrees than other industries (73%) in this sample.

A second significant relationship was found between occupational groups and not being in a training position prior to their current job (p<.027). The results are summarized in Table 14.
Finally, more than half of the military/government occupational group (76%) had not been in the training profession. On the other end, Man/Prod sector reported 61% with prior training experience.

The breakdown in percentages for the data indicated 33% of the sample had a prior training position and 66% of this group had not been in training before their current jobs.

Lastly, Chi Square analysis found a significant relationship between occupational group and communication training importance in solving organizational problems (p .027). The results are summarized in Table 15.
Communication training is thought to be important to all occupational groups in helping to solve organizational problems. Specifically, the service-oriented industries perceived communication training to be very important (profit 70%, non-profit 73%). Finally, 66% of the population felt communication training was very important, 30% felt it was important, 3% were neutral and 1% felt it was unimportant.
DISCUSSION

The present investigation represented an attempt to provide answers to four previously unanswered questions regarding communication training.

First, it attempted to survey communication training attitudes in Central Florida. Specifically, the results of the investigation yielded several conclusions.

Listening was perceived as the most important communication skill and non-verbal communication as the least important. This finding adds verification to previous research which reflects that listening skill is needed most frequently during an average workday (Burley-Allen, 1983). Non-verbal skills, on the other hand, were perceived as the least important by individuals involved in training and development. These results are harmonious with past research reported by Belohlov, Popp and Porte (1974) which ranked nonverbal skills as the lowest area to include in a training curriculum. While these results are clearly inferred by past research as well as the present survey, they appear somewhat contradictory since effective listening involves a variety of non-verbal techniques.

Other results from the survey indicate that training personnel offer communication training in those areas perceived as most
important in their companies. For example, listening received the highest mean importance ranking for question one and the highest percentage of respondents offered training in this area.

The sample estimated less than half (40%) of the employees in their organizations were receiving communication training.

Communication training was perceived to be important to this group of training personnel. The combined categories of very important and important total 96.2%.

The most important communication training goal reported involved facilitating the exchange of ideas and/or information, and the least important reported goal was reducing interpersonal and intergroup conflict. In other words, getting the job done (higher productivity) is more important than the atmosphere in which the job was completed.

Lack of awareness by management of the existence of a communication problem (54.8%) and lack of time (51.9%) were the two highest training barriers.

More than half of the respondents (67.8%) strongly agreed that communication is a combination of natural talent that may be developed by training and experience.

The second question in this investigation asked who evaluates communication training. The results indicated that companies do not have formal evaluation processes. This is likely because evaluation methods in communication training are difficult to execute. Beyond the level of immediate reactions, it is difficult to evaluate the long term impact of soft skill training. Short
of pre-post evaluations based on job-related competencies, evaluations do little more than reflect subjective judgments of the communication training programs.

The third general area considered by the present research involved the training selection process. Results indicated managers (32.6%) nominated their employees for communication training programs more than any other group. Supervisors had the second highest percentage at 12.6%. The results indicate that the responsibility and accountability for employee development lies with the managers and supervisors.

Unlike earlier research, the present survey gathered information from a sample of virtually all persons involved in training and development. Consequently, the results of this research yielded information about the characteristics of a broad sample of individuals in the training and development field. Unlike previous research which limited itself to in-house trainers, the current research surveyed in-house trainers, consultants, counselors and educators. The data gathered from this survey will hopefully increase our awareness of the attitudes of individuals involved in all aspects of training and development.

Finally, current research has never investigated communication training goals of a task-oriented industry versus manufacturing/production, and service-oriented occupational groups. Specifically, this research indicated that there was a significant difference between the service (profit) occupational group and
military/government respondents consistently ranked the goal of reducing interpersonal and intergroup conflict higher than the service industry.

There are two key points to discuss regarding this difference. First, there may be a sample bias based on my failure to separate active military personnel from military contractors in the survey response item. The clumping of military/government personnel could have slanted the results because this sample is primarily comprised of military contractors from companies such as SAIC, Advanced Technology and Eagle Technologies. Secondly, the military/government respondents favorably ranked human relations goal as being important to them. This could have been biased by military contractors who work on short term, training-related projects. In other words, many military/government respondents are high tech contractors and because of contract pressure and deadlines, it becomes increasingly important that teamwork and positive interpersonal communications be established early in the process.

Finally, the present investigation may yield opportunities for future research. A follow-up study could replicate the survey utilized for this investigation on a nationwide population of training and development personnel. Such an effort could be generalized to other areas far better than the conclusions of the present study.
A second area for future research involves the conclusions of the present investigation regarding subjects in the military/government sector. Since the present study combined these divergent areas, a fruitful extension would be to replicate the present survey with each portion of that sector, hence determining if significant differences exist between the two.

Finally, further research is necessary to determine who is most suited to select and evaluate employees for communication training.

It is sincerely hoped that the present research contributes to human relations training.
APPENDIX A

REPLICATION PERMISSION LETTER
October 16, 1986

Dr. Lyle Sussman
University of Louisville
School of Business
Louisville, Kentucky 40292

Dear Dr. Sussman:

I enjoyed talking with you yesterday. As per our conversation, I'm writing you for permission to replicate your study entitled; Communication Training as Perceived by Training Personnel.

I'm presently completing my Masters Degree in Communication at the University of Central Florida in Orlando. My plans to replicate your study will fulfill the thesis requirements for this degree.

I would appreciate any information you have on this paper. A copy of the questionnaire would be very helpful.

Thanks so much for your time and interest.

Sincerely,

Kim Fleming
University of Central Florida
Graduate Student
APPENDIX B

SURVEY COVER LETTER
November 28, 1986

Dear Fellow Human Resource Specialists:

I'm serving as this year's ASTD marketing chairperson and I'm working on my master's degree. I need your help. After working with you for several years, I decided this group would be the prime sample for my thesis research. Therefore, I have purchased the ASTD mailing list and am forwarding to you a questionnaire for completion.

The purpose of this study is to quantify the nature and extent of in-house communication training. The questions are very clear, and the survey should not take more than 10 minutes of your time. If you don't have the time to do this yourself, you might want to delegate the task to another training professional.

Please answer the questions as honestly and accurately as possible. All individual responses will be treated as anonymous and strictly confidential. I would appreciate it if you would complete the questionnaire ASAP, and return it to me in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope by December 19, 1986.

Your response is important to the success of this study. I appreciate your help with it. If you're interested in the survey results, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Kim Fleming
APPENDIX C

1986 SURVEY
COMMUNICATION TRAINING
QUESTIONNAIRE

Please read each question carefully and answer them as they apply to your organization. By "communication training" we mean training that enables organizational members to more efficiently send and receive messages.

I. BACKGROUND DATA

A. Size of employee base (circle one)
   less than 100  100-249  250-500  500-750  750-1000  greater

B. Type of organization (circle one)
   1. Manufacturing and/or Production
   2. Service - Profit
   3. Service - Nonprofit
   4. Military/Government

C. Your educational background (circle one)
   1. High School
   2. Three years or less of college
   3. Four years of college Major__________
   4. Masters
   5. Doctorate

D. What was your position prior to your present job description?

E. Years of experience in training. ________

F. Sex
   ____Male      ____Female

II. QUESTIONS

A. Rank order the following communication areas in terms of how important you feel they are to your organization. (1, most important - 7 least important)
   __Interviewing
   ___Public Speaking
   ___Group Discussion
   ___Listening
   ___Writing (e.g., memos, business letters, etc.)
   ___Reading
   ___Non-Verbal Communication

B. Check the communication areas you currently offer in your training programs.
   __Interviewing
   __Public Speaking
   ___Group Discussion
   ___Listening
   ___Writing (e.g., memos, business letters, etc.)
   ___Reading
   ___Non-Verbal Communication

** SEE REVERSE SIDE **
can never be developed by some people because of personality traits

strongly agree  ___  ___  ___  ___ strongly disagree

is closely related to the amount of formal education a person has had

strongly agree  ___  ___  ___  ___ strongly disagree

is best developed by years of experience on the job

strongly agree  ___  ___  ___  ___ strongly disagree

J. Is your organization more or less likely to be concerned about communication training today than it was 10 years ago? (check one)

____ More likely today  ____ Less today  ____ No change

K. Who selects participants for communication training?

____ Supervisor  ____ Self-appointed  ____ Management  ____ Other

L. Who evaluates impact/change of communication training?

____ Supervisor  ____ Manager  ____ Peers  ____ Training & Development

____ Other
APPENDIX D

1986 FOLLOW-UP LETTER
December 19, 1986

Dear Central Florida ASTD Member:

Recently you received a survey designed to elicit your feedback concerning communication training in today's organization. This survey will help me complete my Masters degree in Communications.

I am writing to remind you to return your questionnaire as soon as possible. As noted in the initial cover letter, all responses will be treated confidentially.

I want to thank you sincerely for your cooperation and wish you a very Merry Christmas and a wonderful year in 1987.

Kim Fleming
APPENDIX E

CORPORATION LISTING OF RESPONDENTS
COJRT ALTERNATIVES
Marlene L. Schiro

CREATIVE DINING/GENERAL MILLS
Cynthia Hasenau

CREATIVE TRAINING CONCEPTS
Darby Ann Neptune

CREATIVISION, INC.
Rick Glasby
Susan A. Gelda
David L. Harter

CUSTOM TRAINING SYSTEMS, INC.
Sandra W. Scaggs, Ed.D.

DAVGar RESTAURANTS, INC.
Joseph R. Hayes

DAYTONA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Marie T. Walker

DELTA BUSINESS SYSTEMS
Barbara S. Poole

DENNY'S RESTAURANT
Michael D. Nagel

DIOCESE OF ORLANDO
George Fournier

DISCOUNT AUTO PARTS
Wickard D. Workman

DYNAMIC CONTROL CORPORATION
Susan Emerson Baxa
Carl Ericsson
Elaine Espy Kirchner
Patt McCann
Barbara Michalek
Janice Warren

E&B CONSULTANTS
Earl Gowen

EAGLE TECHNOLOGY, INC.
Nina Issenberg
Bette R. Jones
Karen K. Metcalf
Mark S. Thush

EAST CENTRAL FLORIDA CONSORTIUM 4
Erlin McColskey

EBS INCORPORATED
Linda Morash

EMPIRE OF AMERICA
Naomi Farwell George

EPILEPSY ASSOCIATION OF CENTRAL FLORIDA
Lynn Walston

EQUINOX
R. Blair Croson

ESSEX CORPORATION
Dennis Baltzley

FLORIDA HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
William A. Schumacher

FLORIDA HOSPITAL MEDICAL CENTER
Mary Ann Black

FLORIDA INFORMATI MANAGEMENT SERVICES
Kerry R. Bruce
Maureen H. Fink
Alyssa Halstead
Bill McQuatters
Nancy J. O'Mara
Lynn Price
Janis Santomassino

FLORIDA SALES & MARKETING INSTITUTE
Jonl C. Martin

FREEDOM SAVINGS & LOAN ASSOCIATION
Jaymi Damron
Dixie L. Haller
Karen Miller
Linda Partin

GENERAL MILLS RESTAURANT DIVISION
Jeff Pelletier
Barbara Richuels

GLENDA McCLOURE & ASSOCIATES
Glenda McClure

GLOBAL CRANE INSTITUTE, INC.
Robert H. Coulombe, Sr.

GRAY SYSTEMS, INC.
Suzanne Gray
Carol Sue Tamsett

GRUMMAN TECHNICAL SERVICES
Mark Morgan
MODULAR INFORMATION SYSTEM
Jim Brownlee

MULTIVARIANT LEARNING SYSTEMS
Dr. George T. DeSau

NAVAL TRAINING CENTER
Lynda J. Alvarez
Thomas E. Gwise
Brenda Hubbard
Delora McDaniel
Barbara J. Reinhardt
Mary (Dee) Sheppe

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL SERVICE
Larry P. Catelli

NORAND CORPORATION
Charlene G. Turner

NORTHROP SERVICES, INC.
Richard E. Picton, II

OPEN LEARNING SYSTEMS
Sarah Haviland Blackmun

ORANGE COUNTY
Jennifer J. Rowe

ORANGE COUNTY DEPARTMENT/SOCIAL SERVICES
Marjorie E. Spence

ORANGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Jeffrey Atwood
Lorraine C. DiNapoli
Janice (Jan) Mulligan
Harry Reinhardt
Joseph E. Stephens
Dr. Wilfred F. Still
Nancy A. Teague
Lynne Thibodeau
Lea A. Widener

ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
Kitty S. Boynton

ORANGE COUNTY COURT ALTERNATIVES
Barbara A. Mills

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE ASSOCIATION
Fred A. Ruoff

ORLANDO REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER
Charlotte C. Rentz

PATHFINDERS COUNSELING
Dr. Walter E. Barker

PRIVATE INDUSTRY COUNCIL
Paul Martin

PROFESSIONAL CONSULTING ASSOCIATES
Karen R. McKenzie

RAM INTEGRATED SYSTEMS
Constance L. Picard

RADISSON PLAZA HOTEL OF ORLANDO
Ann Switzer

RED LOBSTER INNS OF AMERICA
Ronnie Burgess
Fred Burley
Kent Fritts
Sam Jones
Raphael R. Kavanaugh, Ph.D.
Jason Scarlata

ROLLINS COLLEGE
Richard Bommelje

ROLLINS COLLEGE/CONTINUING EDUCATION
Sharon Lusk

SAIC
Douglas B. Elam

SAHMOE & ASSOCIATES
James Sammon

SCHOOL BOARD OF BREvard COUNTY
Susan Jones, Preston

SCIENCE APPLICATIONS INST. CORPORATION
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Lonnie E. Griesemer
Douglas R. Thomson
Jeanine Williamson

SEA WORLD OF FLORIDA
James A. Ferruzzi
Kathey Rios
Beth Sellers

SECURITY FIRST FEDERAL SAVINGS & LOAN
Lauren Ann Jones

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SEMINDLE COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH
Richard L. Sorensen, Ph.D.
Maggie Thomas

SEMINDLE COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH
Colleen S. Cart

SEVILLE TRAINING DIVISION
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SHERATON LAKESIDE INN
Janet MacDonald

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SOUTHEASTERN ACADEMY, INC.
Jo Anne Miller
Joy Suttle

STATE OF FLORIDA DEPT./TRANSPORTATION
Joan A. Maxwell

STATE OF FLORIDA/JOB SERVICE
Donald R. Abberton

STETSON UNIVERSITY
Dr. Jackson C. Stevens

SOUTHERN BELL
Donna Davis

SUN BANK, NA
Elaine Corbin
Pat Green
Judy Hay
Barbara W. Kamm
Nancy K. Moor
Karen Newsome
Martha C. Smith

SUN BANK, NA/CARD CENTER
Rosemary Nerl

SUN BANK, NA/SOUTH ORLANDO OFFICE
Krista Clark
Terri Gillis
Victoria M. Kline

SUN BANKS OF FLORIDA
Lisa Downs
Robert Eicher
Edith Gandy
Jorge Miyares

SUNBANK SERVICE CORPORAT
Eve Hoth
Estella A. Hurwitch
Barbara Shackelford

SERVICE INDUSTRY TRAINING DEVEL. CO.
Joe H. "Casey" Jones

THE EXECUTIVE SPEAKER, INC.
Dr. Peggy Spears Frailey

THE FIRST
Deborah Clark

THE FORUM CORPORATION
Bonnie Rae Jensen

THE ORLANDO CONSULTING GROUP
John Richard Curtis

THE ORLANDO SENTINEL
Kimberly Cheryl Fleming
Chuck Whiting

TOPICS UNLIMITED
Ed Baranowski, CCUE

TRAINING RESEARCH GROUP
David W. Meier

TRAVELERS/EBS
Susan Burns

TUPPERWARE HOME PARTIES
Becky Cherney
Jean Eubanks
Terry Kersey
Pat Molnar
Ann Thompson
Francine Watkins

U.S. Postal Service
Ethel M. Bensted

UNITED TELEPHONE COMPANY OF FLORIDA
Linda M. Gibbs
T. Lavelle Rixie
UNITED TELEPHONE SYSTEMS/FLORIDA GROUP
Neville Blakemore
Jacqueline Brock
Wayne Davis
Pat Leeks
Janet Londers
John McElroy
Carol Jean Painter
Sherry Rigdon
Dai ley Smith
Linda Wenz

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA
Jean Aichele
Dr. Richard A. Corne I
Mary Alice Hartman
Terry Lewis
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Brad Pollins
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Margo Godfrey
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Ruth Nicholson
Myrna Wolf

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VICORP RESTAURANT, INC.
Winston Hall

VICORP VILLAGE INN RESTAURANTS
Michael E. Sudbury

VISION MULTIMEDIA
Peter F. Travers

VISITING NURSE ASSOCIATION
Phylann S. Fusco

VOLUNTEER CENTER
Jean T. Sharpe

VORMERK USA, INC.
Nora A. Bunung

W. B. JOHNSON PROPERTIES
Gae W. Boyd

WALT DISNEY WORLD COMPANY
Ken Bates
Dennis Frare
Mary Jacobson
Richard A. Johnson
Cher Levine
Valerie Oberle
Randy Reardon
Guy Smith

WATSON REALTY CORPORATION
Kathleen J. Caldwell

WESTINGHOUSE ELECTRIC CORPORATION
Constantine Ferriola

WILLIAM A. BROWN & ASSOCIATES
William A. Brown

WILSON WORLD HOTEL MAINGATE
Connie Plint-Foote

WINDERMERE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Charlotte Johnson

WINTER PARK MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
Richard Tunno

WINTER PARK POLICE DEPARTMENT
Neal E. Trautman
REFERENCES


