



TenStep Supplemental Paper

13 January 2004

Training or Education?

Skills cannot be taught; they must be acquired through practice and under expert guidance. Teaching soft skills through training is actually education.

Skills are acquired to make one competent, and therefore trainers must deliver competence, not mere education.

Skills are acquired in two steps:

1. Educating trainees about the results they are expected to achieve and the skills they need to acquire to achieve those results.
2. Practice with a coach who helps cut down trial and error time to acquire competence.

An effective trainer spends 5-10% of the time allotted in the first step (education) and the remaining 90-95% in the next (training). Most training ought to be done in the field.

Classrooms aren't the best places for soft-skills training. Trainers should invite participants to a meeting room for a working session. The working session should aim to come up with some ideas for improving the company. These ideas must meet two criteria:

1. Participants should be able to implement the decisions.
2. The suggestions, if and when implemented, must be measurable and capable of producing financial results in 90 days.

The executives must understand that they are present to make decisions and not to learn. Also, give them an overview of the skills they need to possess to implement their ideas. Additionally, define the criteria for being skilful.

After the introduction, get employees to work on getting support and commitment from others by coaching them on it. This should be done repeatedly until at least 85% of them become proficient in the required skills and achieve the measurable desired results.

Results

All activities that occur after the educational introduction are part of training. The defined skills are developed until trainees demonstrate proficiency in them. This approach works well even with large groups. The steps involved are:

1. Define the measure of the desired skillfulness.
2. Define the measurable desired outcome.
3. Educate succinctly.
4. Train through coached repetition until the desired results and the measurable performance levels are attained.