

Risks We Must Take

The 1980s – changes and challenges ahead . . .

**BY EVA SCHINDLER-
RAINMAN**

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BY EVA SCHINDLER-RAINMAN

Change is ever with us, and the challenges which come with these changes are therefore a part of our lives. Six major changes and challenges will affect the role of the consultant and trainer during the remainder of this decade. Overriding these changes are at least three threads or threats.

Threads and Trends

1. *Doing more with less:* This should concern all of us, because we are seeing a tax revolt by citizen voters. The lessening value of the dollar, inflation and economic turmoil must be reflected and considered in the way of organizations, communities and individuals do business. At the same time, we have a demand for more services. So, we have to do more with less! We have to provide better services with less materials and monies, in addition to an increase in creative utilization of human resources.

2. *The fluctuating national mood:* There is a fluctuating national mood that affects all the changes mentioned in this article. We have been moving from optimism and clarity to cynicism and pessimism, to apathy, to lack of clarity, to what Lord Snow has defined as "holing in." This optimism/pessimism, faith/cynicism affects the people with whom we work, and the mood changes, depending on the value of the dollar, election results, the state of various world crises, and the general state of hostility and violence in local communities. Trainers and consultants need to be sensitive to fluctuating national, local and personal needs.

3. *More rapid and complex changes:* We are experiencing more rapid and complex changes than ever before. The late Margaret Mead wrote, in a major scientific journal, that anybody over the age of 30 is an immigrant to those under that age. That was her way to capsulize the rapidity and complexity of the changes taking place.

We, too, must keep this in mind as we talk about specific changes

and challenges that affect trainers and consultants. An important piece of the complexity is the information overload, and the constant development of new techniques, new knowledge, and new technology which will rapidly become outdated.

Changes and Challenges

Demographic and population changes are extremely important in our business. A variety of dynamics are included here, such as high mobility — persons in and out of cities, in and out of the country, and in and out of our rural areas. The population is growing older, and the number of young employees will continue to decrease. Sixty-three percent of the labor force will be between the ages of 25 and 44 by 1990. Thus, there will be an increase in older workers. There will also be an increase in the number of employed women, with 60 percent of the new jobs likely to be filled by women, and 70 percent of all employable women working by 1990. There are vast groups of new immigrant populations, particularly from Asia and Spanish-speaking countries. This number is dramatically increasing in urban areas.

We shall see increasing competition for work by employable persons. There are some groups who are particularly concerned about the fact that new immigrants are competing for jobs with native-born U.S. citizens.

Challenges Include:

1. Ways to integrate the new, non-native workers.

2. Decreasing stress of persons working in highly competitive systems.

3. Training people who work with new employees as peers, and the training of managers to supervise all employees.

4. The need for persons and systems, trainers and consultants to understand and utilize the resources of different age and stage, ethnic and racial groups. This is extremely important in a competitive world where different resources could be utilized to advance the process of making a product, as well as perhaps improving the product itself.

5. The need to keep current with the changes in population and demography in and around the area in which the consultant/trainer works.

Change No. 2:

Value changes might be looked at as moving from an emphasis on one value to other kinds of values. It is interesting that here is the epitomy of the state of transitions we are experiencing. Transition is the key to unlocking and understanding our own society at this time. We are moving from:

a. An emphasis on *one loyalty* or a few major loyalties to *multiple loyalties*, applying to one's personal as well as one's professional life.

b. An emphasis on *permanent commitments* to an understanding and appreciation of "temporariness." This means that heretofore a lifelong relationship with a spouse, or working from the bottom up in a company was considered satisfactory and positive. Now it is also considered permissible to have sequential relationships both with personal partners as well as in the work and professional world.

c. Feelings of *working to live* and *living to work*, with the term worklife including demands for improved quality of worklife, and such things as increased participation in decision making, an increasingly participative structure at work, flexible work hours, part time work, shared work, etc.

d. Little or *no emphasis on health* to an *increased sensitivity and self-consciousness of the im-*

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portance of health and a healthy environment.

e. *Respect for authority to a confronting and questioning of authority and authority figures.*

f. *Much conforming to time and timing patterns to moving toward situational timing, and a new understanding as to how time can be utilized and organized to one's advantage. We are also moving from day and night cities to 24-hour cities, and 24-hour services, many of which are already available in larger population centers throughout the world.*

Challenges Include:

Many challenges come to mind as one looks at these value changes:

1. The need to focus on the individual, and to build meaningful rewards and recognition into people's worklife, and to some extent, into their personal life.

2. It becomes increasingly important to develop career ladders and life-goal planning as part of the on-the-job planning development and training programs.

3. It may be valuable to offer opportunities for value clarifications, so that persons can look at what values they wish to hold on to, and which they might release.

4. It is important to develop new ways to involve employees in decision making, both individually and in groups.

5. There must be incentives to decrease alienation from work, and to increase motivation and satisfaction for workers.

6. It is also possible to involve employees in developing new work patterns and new ways to improve both the conditions of work as well as the product being produced.

Change No. 3:

Changing organizations: As society changes; as technology revolutionizes the workload; as new information is available and new ways are found to distribute it, organizations will have to change. New organizational structures are developing from the matrix organization to the "flattened-out" organization. Some organizations are becoming more centralized, others more decentralized. But whatever the change, organizations are responding to some of the

trends that are now or will be happening in our society, and in the world.

a. Changes included here are the multi-national collaborations between either the units of the same company, or units of different complexes working toward similar goals and purposes. New collaborations are developing between business, government, and private non-profit organizations. Indeed, some interesting networks are developing that utilize human resources and knowledge in creative and "doing-more-with-less" manners. Also, there is more inter-unit competition for good services, or a better product, or more units completed in a given amount of time.

b. There is also a clear emphasis on mission, on goal setting clarity, as well as the involvement in planning of as many people as possible.

c. There is an increasing emphasis by large systems on their social responsibility. This is evidenced in the participation in community life by large-systems people, and the development in many large companies of a new job category, that of directors of community affairs or directors of volunteer services. There is a trend in business to have employees participate in worthwhile community projects.

d. As the dollar tightens, there is more emphasis on in-house training and upgrading. There will be a decreasing need for outside consultants, or, where outside consultants are utilized, they will be part of an inside/outside team for the purposes of strengthening the insider, giving him or her more visibility, more skills, and making them more able to carry on without the use of outside help.

Challenges for Changing Organizations:

There are many challenges here for trainers and consultants, including the following:

1. To help managers have skills of organizational diagnosis, so they not only have a number of alternative methods available, but so they can implement these methods, or know whom to ask for help.

2. To help managers learn how to handle confrontation and hostility. This becomes extremely important since, in most of our work settings, managers do not have the skills to handle confrontations creatively and usefully.

3. To help decision makers, managers and others learn the skills of collaboration. There is a great deal of skill involved in trying to help different persons and organizations work together toward common goals and/or purposes.

4. Trainers and consultants need to help persons, with whom they work, learn to understand and manage a matrix organization if that is what the system is moving toward, or is already involved in.

5. Increased knowledge of general systems theory is helpful.

6. Cross-cultural knowledge and skills. The latter is particularly important in a society where, due to the influx of newcomers as well as equal opportunity legislation, there will be many different people working together in a unit, doing similar jobs. The differences may be nationality, age, sex, race, religion, life style, etc. These people need to be integrated into the work groups.

7. Working people on all levels need to become more sophisticated communicators, with the ability to communicate with a variety of different persons and groups. For instance, the physician must communicate with the patient, the paramedical person, the aide, the volunteer, the social worker, persons representing the religious community, as well as colleagues in the medical community with different specialties.

8. In many systems, it is becoming increasingly important to help appropriate persons learn effective community relations, and the utilization of volunteers within the system, and/or workers who are utilized as volunteers in the community, not only to give service, but to do a public relations job for the system.

9. As available funds for outside consultants decrease, it is vital to develop inside training capacities

and to develop managers as trainers.

10. On all decision-making levels, it is useful to help people learn the skills of goal setting, futuring, and the implementation of these activities. There are alternative methods and techniques for doing this. Participants/employees who learn how to do futuring and goal planning with action strategy skills become an important asset to their own system.

Change No. 4:

Changes of complex communication technology and systems: Workshops ranging from a few hours to several weeks are being given to introduce persons who have had no background in machine technology to the purpose, philosophy and utilization of computer technology.

a. Computers are but one part of the developing systems revolution, but certainly are an important part, including large computers in the work world, as well as home computers, and small portable computers. Some old machines are going out of date, and many new ones are or seem to be a great deal more complex. Certainly it is clear that the new machines can do a vast variety of tasks, providing that the human beings guiding them understand their capacities.

b. There are multi-media possibilities for in-house training. This means that with fewer dollars and better-trained internal trainers, more people can have in-house training opportunities without the cost of travel, lodging and tuition.

c. The information explosion is exciting and frustrating at the same time. Yet, it is with us, and it is important to develop a priority system to know which information is needed, and which should be eliminated.

d. There is also a rapid change in jobs. Old jobs become obsolescent, or need to be done in new and different ways. Indeed, if one wants to keep up with one's job it becomes very necessary to have an ongoing lifelong learning experience, either in-house, or available elsewhere.

Challenges:

1. Complex communication technology changes require that employees understand them and become familiar and comfortable with the new socio-technical systems.

2. There should be opportunities to look at and learn about new media possibilities. These include conferencing by computer which will make it possible for units which are geographically separated to consult with each other on a regular basis.

3. It also becomes increasingly important to help clients sort out what they need to know in terms of current information.

Change No. 5:

Emphasis on better utilization and development of human resources is perhaps one of the most exciting changes that affects trainers and consultants, because of increased emphasis on the more human tapping, development and utilization of human resources.

a. This includes opportunities to develop underutilized human resources, such as: women, minority persons, emotionally and physically handicapped persons, newcomers to our shores, low-status persons who have had a minimum of opportunities, and older citizens in our society. In some cases, we can add the very young as part of the underutilized human resource population.

b. Opportunities for in-house mobility as a motivation for work are being developed. These include in-house, on-the-job training, career counseling, community-service counseling, pre-retirement counseling, and incentives for taking ongoing professional development courses, either internally or elsewhere.

c. There is concern about the improvement of the quality of work life for all, including professional persons, custodial persons, para-professional and clerical persons. This permeates all levels, all kinds of work, from the top executive to the newest direct-service employee. The exciting part of this change is that it emphasizes the participation of workers in developing and implementing things

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that will improve their quality of work life, or recommending implementations and suggestions, when these cannot be done by the workers themselves.

d. It is becoming increasingly clear that it is necessary to utilize many diverse "heads" and specialties to make decisions and solve problems, rather than relying on the capabilities of only one or two people. As the world becomes more complex, a more complex and diverse group of human beings must be gathered to analyze, diagnose and make decisions in relation to a vast variety of puzzles and problems.

e. New human-service teams, made up of volunteers, professionals, and para-professionals, are being developed. These teams emphasize and utilize different resources and capabilities of its members. Such teams may be found in probation departments, school systems and hospitals.

Challenges:

1. It is clear that in order to uncork human potential, to increase tapping into available human resources, to better utilize what human beings have to offer, it will be necessary to learn a variety of approaches, including: the development of human resource skills banks, temporary task and work forces, and teaming in different ways for a variety of purposes.

2. It will also be important to learn and understand the characteristics of different people. These include cultural differences, life style, belief systems, child rearing patterns, and differences in family structures. The challenge here is how to utilize the beauty of difference.

3. It will be important to learn new communication skills with dif-

ferent communication receivers in mind. For instance, the physician now needs to communicate with patients, nursing staff, paramedical persons, social workers, occupational therapists, religious persons, and a variety of volunteers. The physician also needs to communicate with hospital administrators, the court system, insurance systems, the police, and even unions.

4. New recognition and reward systems will be needed in addition to the present salary and wage classification and increase patterns. Included here are: Skill in verbal and non-verbal recognition, rewards for innovative ideas, feedback on feedback, etc.

5. Continuing, lifelong education must be developed so that workers will not only have the challenge, but also the necessary skill to keep motivated, excited and productive.

Change No. 6:

More emphasis will be placed on *creativity and initiative of leadership* persons than ever before. Leaders will need both right and left-brain functions if they are to do an adequate job of leading.

a. Managers need to be educators-trainers, as well as managers of persons.

b. As conflict increases as part of the changing systems, it will become increasingly necessary to learn to utilize conflict in creative and useful ways.

c. Moving with the theme of doing more with less, there will need to be an emphasis on the understanding of the financial perspectives and its management.

d. Leaders will need to continually update their own knowledge and skills and make sure that the same opportunities are offered to others in the system. It is interesting to note that one of the changes in leadership will continue to be the need for leaders to know when and how to *involve*, as well as whom to involve in decision making and problem solving.

e. Leaders will have to be conversant with some of the changing combinations that provide opportunity for the functions of leadership to be carried out. Some of these combinations include:

- *co-leaders*, where the powers of the leadership and tasks are shared fairly equally;

- *shared leadership*, where there is an agreement between leaders on who will do what and how they will share, which may or may not be equal;

- *sequential leadership*, where there is an agreement of who will be the leader for what amount of time and who will follow;

- *functional leadership*, where the leader becomes the leader because he or she has some particular knowledge or skill to offer for a particular task, and when that is no longer needed someone else will take over the leadership role (i.e., a financial expert could be the leader when budget and financial future plans are being settled, but relinquishes that role when future planning of some other kind is done);

- *temporary combinations of decision-making leaderships*: This may be as temporary as one time, or may take as long as six to eight months, depending on the situation and the needs.

Challenges:

1. The challenges here include helping persons who have been long-time leaders to change their style and to understand why such changes are needed, and to help them learn the skills in operational settings of tapping into the resources of other persons working with them.

2. It will be important for trainers and consultants to help leaders learn how to detect conflict, and utilize it as a resource, rather than seeing it as a divider or as resistance. Indeed, here it may be important to help the leaders learn that the energy expended by resistance to change is energy that can be harnessed to make the change more creative and more useful. Conflict utilization and resolution will become a very important leadership skill and tool.

3. Another challenge will be to help leaders become more sensitive to the many realities in their systems, and to understand how to communicate these to those with whom they work. Head persons will need to know what style of

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leadership is needed when, and leaders will need to be comfortable with the challenges and complexities of change. Of course, no leader can know everything, but competent leaders can know where the resources for help are when they are needed.

Trainers and consultants will need to take risks, many through the '80s and '90s. Here they are:

1. To increase our knowledge and skills in relation to such things as future trends, trend analysis, alternative ways to do future planning.

2. To increase our training methodology tool kits. To invent new, creative and individually or organizationally tailored training designs. Each situation has some different ingredients from the last one and deserves the creative abilities of the trainer/consultant in designing experiences to fit a particular situation, its purposes, needs, and money and time budgets.

3. We must risk the inside-outside team concept, and be willing to team with an insider or outsider, as the case may be, in order to increase our skills, visibility, methodology and ability to influence, as well as to be of real help to the other person.

4. Most trainers/consultants will need to add to what they know already in terms of data collection and resource techniques, including action research methodology and techniques.

5. To selectively utilize or not utilize new technology, packages, machines, etc. All that is new is not necessarily better, nor is all that is old necessarily bad or outdated. Technology must be tailored to the particular situation which includes not only the pur-

poses of training but the money, time and human budgets available also.

6. We must learn more effective ways to involve potential participants in planning and training, and to have experienced participants learn the skills of becoming trainers.

7. We must risk willingness to understand and learn all about the new technologies, and then know how to selectively use them or not use them.

8. We must risk looking at better utilization of our own time as well as that of our clients.

9. Trainers and consultants must learn more skillful ways to confront clients when they believe there is an honest difference of opinion, of value, or diagnosis. It is important to be able to differ with one's client in constructive and creative ways.

10. We must not only talk about temporariness, but be willing to be temporary ourselves. There must be willingness to experiment, and to be able to differentiate success from failure in the experiment. It becomes important to be able to risk failure as well as success.

11. The willingness to risk introducing the possibility of volunteer services in and by systems.

12. Another risk is making plans for ongoing professional and educational developments.

13. We must be willing to risk admitting that we do not know something. At this point it is important to be able to recruit additional substitute trainer-consultant resources.

It is exciting, interesting, and challenging to live in turbulent, changing times. As consultants and trainers our professional skills will continuously be confronted, and therefore we must grow and change to produce the best possible "products" for delivery to our clients.

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Eva Schindler-Rainman is a training and development consultant based in Los Angeles, CA.



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