STRATEGY AND THE FAT SMOKER

CHAPTER 10

The majority of business training… CONTINUE

BY DAVID MAISTER

THE MAJORITY OF BUSINESS TRAINING is a waste of money and time, because only a microscopic fraction of training is ever put into practice and the hoped-for benefits obtained. Training is a wonderful *last* step in bringing about changed organizational and personal behavior, but a pathetically useless *first* step.

Companies train people in new areas but then send them back to their operating groups, subject to the same measures and management approaches as before. People can detect immediately a lack of alignment between what they are being trained in and how they are being managed. When they do detect it, little, if any, of what has been discussed or "trained" ever gets implemented.

People can detect immediately a lack of alignment between what they are being trained in and how they are being managed. When they do detect it, little, if any, of what has been discussed or "trained" ever gets implemented.

Most firms go about training entirely the wrong way. They decide what they *wish* their people were good at, allocate a budget to a training director and ask that training director to come up with a good program. Training is too often used as a (personally) inexpensive way to look like you're doing something if you're a manager.

Bringing about change is immensely difficult and complex. Before designing any change program, it is necessary for managers to address questions in four key areas:

- Systems: Does the company *actually monitor, encourage, and reward* this (new) behavior?
- Attitude: Do people *want* to do this? Do they buy in to its importance?

- Knowledge: Do they know *how* to do it?
- Skills: Are they any good at *implementing and executing* what they know?

As should be clear, training would be a "solution" for only some of these conditions. It is management's job to make people *want* to learn things by managing the "*why*"—helping them understand why this is important, why it is exciting and fulfilling, and why people should sacrifice their time and attention to get involved.

If you can be convincing on the *why*, the training itself can often be trivially easy. The correct approach to training is to sit top management down and ask: "What are people not doing that we want them to be doing? And do we really know why they aren't doing them?"

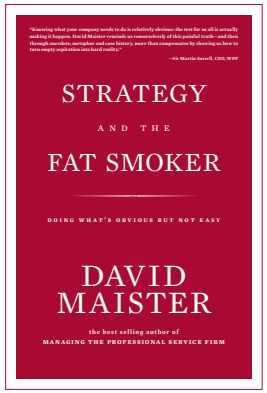
It is management's job to make people want to learn things by managing the "why".

Then it will be necessary to figure out a complete sequence of actions to address each of these questions:

- What behaviors by top management need to change to convince people that the new behaviors are really required, not just encouraged? If the behavior is going to be optional, then so should the training be.
- What measurements need to change?
- What has to happen before the training sessions occur in order to bring about the change?
- What has to be in place the very day they finish?

If the training has been in regular operating groups, in carefully chosen topics, right when the group can use the training, and with the group's leader in the room, they can immediately begin a discussion of how they plan to integrate the training's ideas into their practices. With the right preparation and follow-up, training can be immensely powerful. Without all this, it can be (and usually is) an immensely wasted opportunity.

INFO



BUY THE BOOK

Click here to get more details or buy a copy of David Maister's *Strategy and the Fat Smoker.*

ABOUT **THE AUTHOR**

David Maister is widely acknowledged as one of the world's leading authorities on the management of professional service firms. For two decades he has acted as a consultant to prominent professional firms around the world, on a wide variety of strategic and managerial issues. In 2002, he was named as one of the top 40 business thinkers in the world (Business Minds, by Tom Brown, PrenticeHall/ Financial Times). He is the author of the bestselling books *Managing the Professional Service Firm* (1993), *True Professionalism* (1997), *The Trusted Advisor* (2000), *Practice What You Preach* (2001) and *First Among Equals* (2002). These books have been translated into 14 languages. For seven years, he served as a professor on the faculty of the Harvard Business School (1979-85), prior to launching his consulting practice. He lives in Boston, Massachusetts.

In March of 2005, he finally took his own advice, gave up smoking and lost 30 pounds.

Visit his website at *www.davidmaister.com*.

DOWNLOAD THIS AND OTHER CHAPTERS OF THE BOOK

This PDF is part of an ongoing podcast series that explores David Maister's new book, ***Strategy and the Fat Smoker***. Subscribe to the podcast using Itunes, or visit the subscription area on his website, ***www.davidmaister.com/subscriptions*.**

COPYRIGHT INFO

The copyright in this work belongs to the author, who is solely responsible for the content. Please direct content feedback or permissions questions to the author at *david@davidmaister.com*.