

Employee Assistance

SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS

JANUARY 1993

VOL.5, NO.6



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Companies have learned to their chagrin that some training programs can inappropriately challenge cherished employee values. The result can be costly lawsuits, not improved morale—unless you can detect and deter the would-be influencers.

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EA and Wellness in 1993

January is a time of New Year's resolutions—a time to renew and start again. The Clinton administration has also raised optimism in some health-care areas. What this issue reminds me of is my usual chat with Jack Erfurt and his ideas about EA and the wellness field. It was with that in mind, that I recently read Jack Erfurt's, Andrea Foote's and Max Heirich's piece in the *Journal of Employee Assistance Research*. It mentions that a U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion study of 1,358 work sites noted that 24 percent of the surveyed companies had an EAP while 65 percent had a wellness/health-promotion program.

The disparity between those two statistics raised my eyebrows. It also caused me to wonder where EA and wellness could intersect. The journal story obliged. EA programs and wellness programs do well in a case-finding, case-following, cross-referral function. Wellness programs can offer prevention programming, screen and find cases. EAPs can access, refer and follow up. It's this follow-up, aftercare component that I find most interesting. EA programs will mature with functions separate from wellness programs. EA will write about them.

The whole issue of wellness also affects the company's bottom line—a concern on the part of all corporate businesses. Our stories by Bruce Davis and Martha Goman point to some benefits. As the workforce changes and competition for workers increases, well-run wellness and fitness programs may be a deciding factor to the health-conscious worker.

In this issue, Lawrence Pile presents an intriguing story titled *The Siren Call of Modern Pied Pipers*. Many of us have been workplace consultants for some time. EA professionals have been doing training in the corporate setting since day one. To suggest some of these programs have a hidden agenda with a sometimes deleterious effect should heighten our awareness considerably. It did mine.

Sharon Scott's piece on peer-pressure reversal rounds out January's EA editorial.

A final note on wellness. It has long been my philosophy that mental health and wellness start with the individual. The individual of concern is the EA professional—you and I. I have long embraced the concept that there are several means to this end. Some use self-help, some use professional counselors, some use such alternative methods as relaxation, visualization, exercise, meditation, nutrition and others. It is this holistic approach to the troubled employee and subsequent referral to the most effective health care that makes EA successful as a field. Staying open to the emerging health-care options before us may be just one more way for EA to help workers and companies thrive in the '90s.

A final note. Our meeting at the EAPA Conference in Atlanta with our excellent editorial advisory board has once again positioned *Employee Assistance* magazine in the cutting edge of developments in the field. The recently published 1993 editorial calendar reflects our plan to bring you more timely, practical articles on organizational development and employee benefits. As the EA field continues to be pushed and pulled in new directions, look to EA to bring you the trends.

A reminder to you. Please support the companies and services who advertise. Without them there would be no EA publications of any kind. Thanks.

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Illustration by Nancy Pierce

The Siren Call Of Modern Pied Pipers

Training seminars that meddle with employee belief systems cannot be justified by the positive results they sometimes attain

In an article in *Working Woman* titled "Wacky Management Ideas That Work," Nancy Austin wrote, "...Making it in modern times requires staking out brave new competitive territory. And to do that, the tool managers most urgently need is imagination." Few CEOs, managers, or even shop foremen would argue with that observation. Differences arise, however, in proposals offered to produce or stimulate this vital tool.

Along with new or expanded imagination and creativity, corporations throughout North America increasingly seek ways to augment productivity (and profits) by teaching employees stress reduction, self-regulation, accelerated learning, and accepting a greater share of responsibility for themselves and their companies.

To accomplish these commendable and even necessary goals, numerous businesses are turning to a mushrooming crop of training and consultation firms that offer workshops, seminars, and courses that claim to transform employees into highly motivated and

efficient visionaries and producers.

Among the major corporations that have enlisted these firms are AT&T, GM, Ford, IBM, Calvin Klein, Westinghouse, Du Pont, Scott Paper, Campbell Soup, Lockheed, RCA, Procter & Gamble, All State, NEC, Boeing Aerospace, General Foods, GE, and McDonald's—in short, approximately 20 percent of the Fortune 500 corporations, plus innumerable smaller companies. These training companies also have contracts with the IRS, CIA, the Army, Navy, and Air Force, as well as numerous state, county, and municipal agencies.

Many trainers, however, use techniques and promote philosophies at variance with the moral and religious convictions of employees who are urged, and sometimes required, to attend the workshops. Most often, these techniques and philosophies arise from the broad and variegated matrix of the so-called New Age

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By Lawrence A. Pile