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Learning Narrative

1. Describe the Learning activity— I joined the World Book sales force as a district manager trainee.

2. Describe the Learning

a. What was the essence of what you learned (i.e., the most important-significant outcomes)?

When I joined the World Book sales force, I was a reluctant learner. I was not sure that I wanted to sell books for a living, but I needed the income during the summer. In the fall, I expected to move to Dallas to run the Dallas Graduate School of Psychology. I signed up for the Management Development Program (MDP). As an MDP, I was expected to demonstrate the product 12 times a week. My basic pay was \$150 per week for the 12 demonstrations plus commissions. The required demonstrations to get the basic pay taught me the law of averages in sales. Doing the demonstrations created sales which increased my income from the basic \$150 to between \$400 and \$500 per week.

b. How anticipated or unanticipated were these outcomes?

I did not anticipate the degree of success that I experienced. I soon learned that the law of averages was absolute—that I could count on making one sale for every 3-4 demonstrations. I was also learning how to make customers feel comfortable, how to arrange the demonstration to lead to success, and how to ask for the order. I also learned product loyalty. This taught me that I could really be proud to place our products in homes.

3. Describe how the Learning was acquired

This was a program that involved basic sales processes, but it also taught me a lot about myself. I learned that selling and teaching were very similar. Economics prompted the learning – I had to do it to make a living for a short period of time (I thought). There was a learning agenda put in place by the managers who hired me. I had a training class and many on-the-job training experiences with my manager. It all took place in the context of being an MDP training to become a District Sales Manager.

The strategies were imposed by the Management Development Program. The steps in the process were established by the training manager for whom I worked. She sent me to a workshop for training. I bought the sales kit, and then she scheduled a time to go out with me to show me how to make sales.

The most helpful resource was my manager. She cared about my success and gave me every opportunity to learn. She called me every day at about 7:30 AM to see how I was doing. Then she worked with me every opportunity she could to show me how to do the work.

The learning process was enabled the most by the structure of the program. If I did not do the demonstrations, I did not get the basic salary. It was secondarily enabled by my manager's care and concern for my attitude.

My first inklings that "new Learning" was occurring were when I began to control the sales environment without fear. I had learned that I could show my product with skill and create an atmosphere in which the customer was likely to say "yes."

I knew when the learning had taken place when I taught the new sales workshop after being in the business less than 3 months. I was able to teach what I had learned more effectively than I had been taught because my training was in teaching and learning.

4. Describe how this experience has influenced and impacted other areas of your life.

The outcomes of this experience are felt in my life every day. Teaching is selling, and selling is teaching. I teach and train people every day. As I do so, I am reminded of how I learned to sell/teach. This background stimulated me to learn how to recruit new students and how to solicit new work opportunities. The experience was significant because it boosted my self-esteem and gave me confidence in the business community that I did not have before. After learning how to sell, recruit, and train, I believed that I could do anything I set my mind on doing.