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USING A "LIVE" CASE VIA VIDEO TAPE A TOWN AND GOWN APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Although the case study method of instruction is extremely popular in business courses, one frequently hears students complain that case study is not realistic, that cases seem "dead." In an attempt to provide a more realistic situation and to make the case method more dynamic, an actual grievance case involving a local hospital was recorded on video-tape. The tape has been used in Principles of Management, Personnel Management, and Labor-Management Relations classes. Student interest and attention during the viewing of the tape is extremely high, and discussion of the issues after viewing is positively. With increased availability of video recording equipment, this method could add the needed ingredient that the case study method needs for greater student interest and involvement.

INTRODUCTION

The opportunity for this project occurred by sheer luck. While talking with a personnel manager of a local hospital, the subject came up regarding the problem of training supervisors in the importance of following the principles of effective discipline and of following hospital regulations regarding disciplinary procedures. In many cases supervisors were either too lenient or too harsh on employees involved in a disciplinary action. The personnel manager felt that if supervisors would have to sit in on a grievance hearing, they would have more insight in dealing with corrective action.

An actual case was chosen from the files of the hospital grievance committee. All names were changed in the transcript to prevent any legal problems. I then created a script that would retain all the pertinent points of the case and yet be such shorter than the original hearing (from three hours to about twenty-five minutes).

PRODUCTION

Although I have used business students to role play cases in the past, I felt the quality of the production was important enough to warrant a more professional acting job. The Drama Department at the University was contacted and was agreeable, even excited, to work on the project. After several rehearsals, the Personnel Manager of the hospital was invited to a "dress rehearsal" to view the play." The main purpose of this visit was to insure that the important points regarding the case had not been omitted from the script and that the graduate drama students were not taking too much dramatic privilege in staging the case. After a few minor changes, the case was ready to role play for video-taping.

At this point the Communications Department got into the act.

Props, cameras, video recorders and other necessary gear was assembled. Actual taping time for the twenty-five minute production was about four hours. Numerous lines were re-taped, and various scenes were repeated in order to create the most realistic and believable production possible. Professors of business, communication, and drama huddled several times during the afternoon to make alterations and improvements to the script and action.

Upon completion, the tape was carefully edited, a leader was attached, and title and credits added. A musical sound track was overlaid at the beginning and end of the tape.

HOSPITAL USE

The tape was first used as the focal point in a seminar on disciplinary action in the local hospital. The tape provided much discussion among the supervisors attending the seminar. A post-seminar questionnaire of those in attendance revealed the following information concerning the tape:

- 88% felt the acting was "excellent." 52% thought the tape was the on-the-spot filmed account of an actual grievance proceeding.
- 92% responded that the errors of the supervisor involved in the case were "clearly" presented by the tape.
- 84% responded that the errors of the employee were "clearly" presented by the tape.
- 72% were able to make suggestions concerning the conduct of the grievance hearing (i.e., information the committee should have asked for but did not, etc.)

CLASS USE

The tape is used as the foundation of a two hour in-class experiential exercise in either Principles of Management or Personnel Management. The first half of the tape, that portion depicting the grievance hearing, is shown, and the students are asked to analyze what occurred, why, what errors were observed, and what decision they would make concerning the employee. After group and class discussion of these questions, the remainder of the tape is shown. This portion portrays the incident as seen through the eyes of each of the two main characters--the employee and his supervisor. A discussion is then held concerning perceptual differences and how it colors the decision process. Finally, the class is asked to role play how the supervisor should have handled the incident.

Reports from classes using this form of experiential exercise have been good. Students also think the filming of the grievance hearing was done at the actual hearing and do not realize the participants are drama students.

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CONCLUSION

By observing the reenactment of an actual grievance procedure, students are better able to experience the roles of the participants and subsequently really role play the incident the way it should have been handled. The exercise is definitely student-centered and has received high ratings for its realism and for its learning value. The success of this town and gown project was so positive that other like projects are being sought.

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