

# Doctor, I Have An Aspirin Problem

By Nanette Miner, EdD

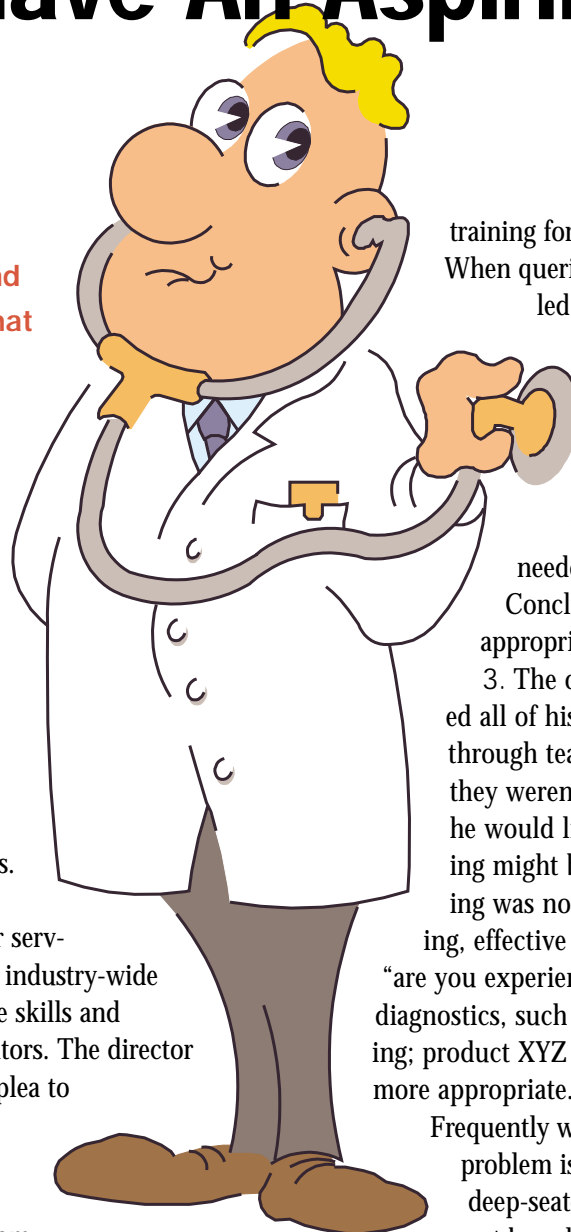
**When you go to the doctor do you tell him your symptoms and ailments, or do you tell him what treatment you should receive?**

When you take your car to the mechanic because it's making that clunk-clunk-clunk sound every time you make a right-turn, do you tell the mechanic to rotate your tires? Too often managers and business owners pre-determine the solution to their business problem; and often that *perceived* solution involves training the workers in some aspect.

Easily, 50% of the time, this treatment is inappropriate for the symptoms. Three illustrations:

1. A company with a large customer service department came in dead-last in an industry-wide survey that rated their customer service skills and response time against their six competitors. The director of the customer service center made a plea to the training department for customer service training. A needs assessment was conducted to determine what the true training need was. In reality, the computer system that the worker's needed to use in order to address customer requests and issues was convoluted, confusing and populated with erroneous data. Conclusion: No amount of customer service training would have stopped these workers from giving poor customer service.

2. A contractor's supply-house had both internal and external sales forces. The owner of the company requested



training for the external sales people. When queried about the symptoms that led him to believe there was a need for training, he stated that sales were good, and the salespeople were proactive about prospecting, but the sales people were "full of themselves and needed to be taken down a notch."

Conclusion: Training was not the appropriate method to reach this goal.

3. The owner of a beauty salon wanted all of his service professionals to go through team building training because they weren't "up-selling" to the degree he would like. Conclusion: Sales training might be necessary, but team building was not. Perhaps sales-skills training, effective probing methods such as, "are you experiencing breaking?," or effective diagnostics, such as, "I notice you have flaking; product XYZ could assist you," would be more appropriate.

Frequently what the manager sees as the problem is simply a symptom of a more deep-seated issue, which may or may not be solved with training. To call a training professional in to administer training without first allowing time for an adequate needs analysis of the organization or the work group in question, is like going to the doctor and saying, "Doctor, I have an aspirin problem." The first step in successful training is to allow for an adequate diagnosis of symptoms and their possible causes.

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*Nanette Miner, EdD, is founder of The Training Doctor, LLC, a CT-based firm which specializes in the custom-design of training to increase the performance of an organization's personnel assets. Reprinting of all or part of this article is prohibited without the express permission of the author. Please contact Dr. Miner at 800-282-5474 or nanette@trainingdr.com. Visit www.trainingdr.com for more information.*