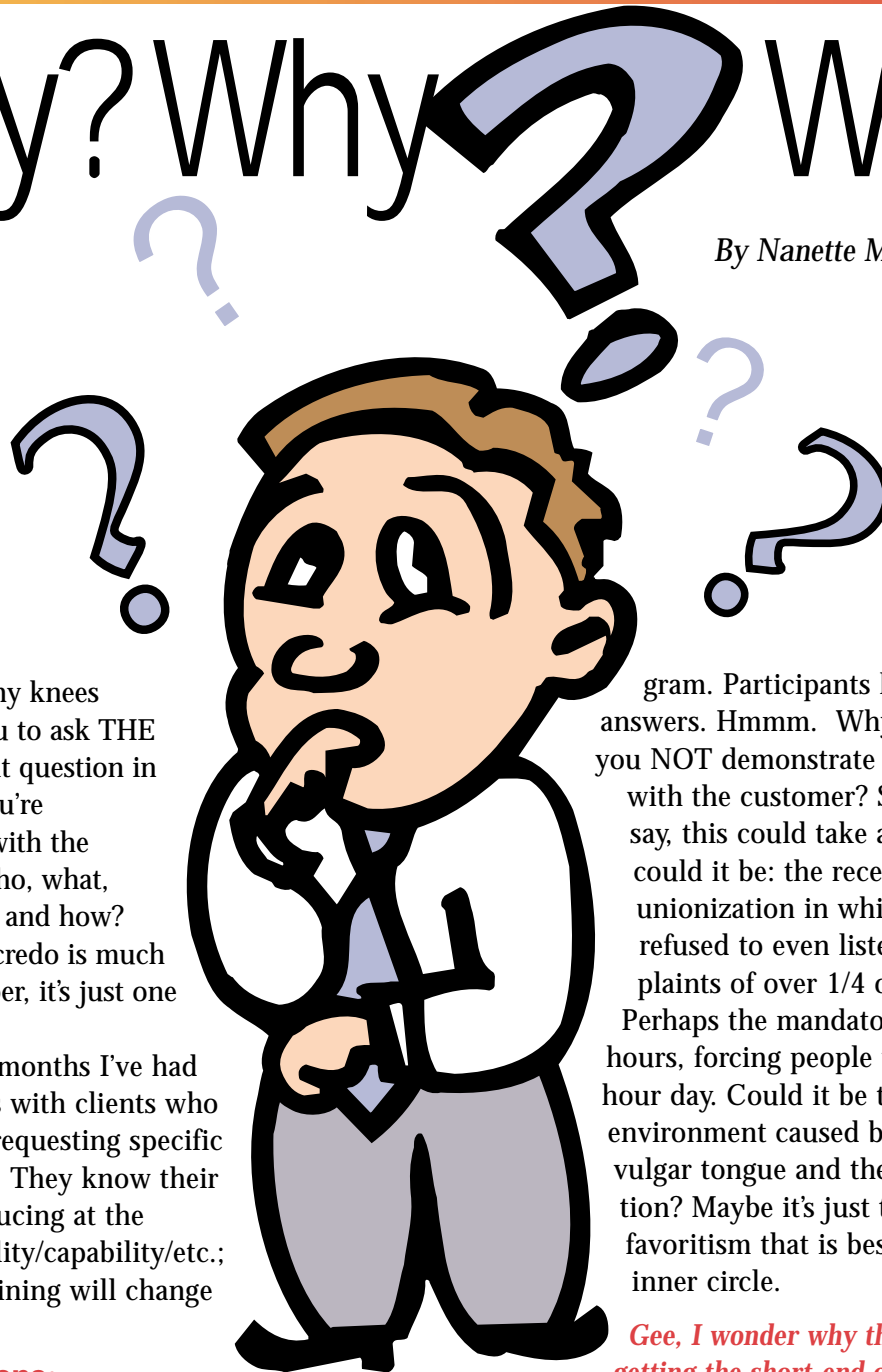


# Why? Why? Why?

By Nanette Miner, EdD



I am down on my knees beseeching you to ask THE most important question in training: WHY? You're probably familiar with the reporter's credo: who, what, where, when, why, and how? Well, the trainer's credo is much simpler to remember, it's just one word. WHY?

In the past few months I've had several encounters with clients who have come to me requesting specific training programs. They know their people aren't producing at the required level/quality/capability/etc.; and they think training will change the situation.

### A few illustrations:

Client A requests Customer Service training ("just the basics, ma'am"). The inside sales reps are being discourteous to customers. WHY? I ask. Because they don't know customer service skills, client replies. Why have you employed them, on average, for over seven years if they don't have basic skills? I scream to myself. We do a pilot pro-

gram. Participants know the right answers. Hmm. Why, then, I ask, do you NOT demonstrate this knowledge with the customer? Sit down, they say, this could take awhile. Let's see, could it be: the recently averted unionization in which the owner refused to even listen to the complaints of over 1/4 of the workforce? Perhaps the mandatory training, after hours, forcing people to look at a 12+ hour day. Could it be the hostile work environment caused by the VP with the vulgar tongue and the nasty disposition? Maybe it's just the blatant favoritism that is bestowed upon the inner circle.

*Gee, I wonder why the customers are getting the short-end of the stick?*

Client B requests Meeting Follow Through training. Great ideas are generated by this unit all the time, but nothing ever seems to get done. WHY? I ask. They don't know how to follow through, client replies, they need some tools. Mind if I ask a few potential participants WHY? Sit down, this could take awhile. There's no clear direction from above:

(Continued)

it's ready, shoot, aim. We're only empowered to make recommendations, not decisions. Upper management's goals are a constantly moving target; it's three baby steps forward, one giant step back. The three levels of hierarchical approval bog the process down. We're constantly in crisis mode - what's "hot" today may be moot by Thursday.

***This group convinced me! What's the point?***

Client C requests Team training for a 14-person incoming call center that doesn't gel with the rest of the organization. There is a definite "us" vs. "them" mentality between the 14 call center employees and the remaining 100+ employees. WHY? Gee, could it be that they're in a room by themselves? On an entirely different floor than the rest of the organization? With their own entrance? That they can't leave the phones and nobody ever stops by to visit them? Hmmm.

***In fact this was a highly cohesive team. A GREAT team of 14 people! You never saw a better self-managed, supportive group than these folks.***

As a trainer, manager, consultant...please don't try to train away a symptom. It's like the head cold you ignore - it just comes back as pneumonia, and it's

really nasty now. The only question you need to ask - and to have answered by many people of different ranks and with different viewpoints of the organization - is, WHY? Why aren't you pleasant to the customers? Why don't your projects ever seem to be finished? Why do you feel isolated from the rest of the organization? Why do you think quality has slipped 17%? Why is scrap so high? What WHY? question fits your organization?

Keep digging. Keep probing. Frequently people (and organizations) in turmoil cannot see the root of their problem because they are so consumed with the pain. It is your job to expose it and conquer it. The Hippocratic oath of the training profession should be: I will not treat a symptom. I will not rest until the root cause is exterminated.



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