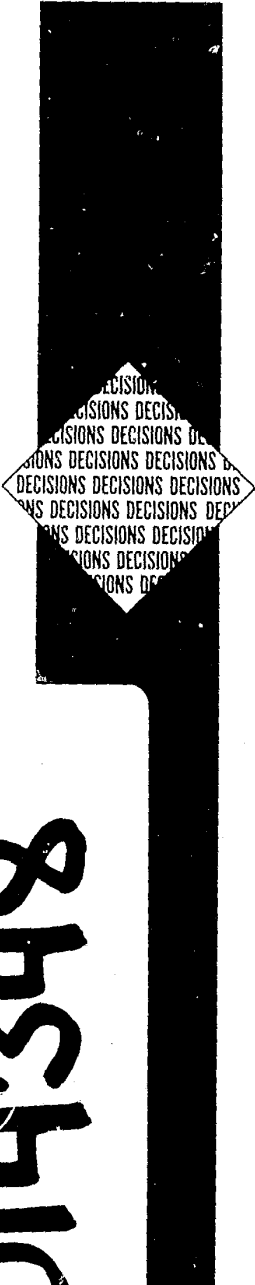


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EVALUATION
REPORT

third annual supervisory board conference

LAW ENFORCEMENT
ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION
REGION VIII

ntana North Dakota South Dakota Utah Wyoming

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This report is the distillation of responses to a questionnaire designed specifically for the Third Annual Supervisory Board Conference held in Cheyenne, Wyoming, May 24-26, 1972.

**AN EVALUATION REPORT OF A WORKSHOP
ON DECISION MAKING FOR SUPERVISORY BOARD
MEMBERS IN REGION VIII LAW ENFORCEMENT
ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION**

**Compiled and Edited
by
Frank Dell'Apa and Bruce Martin**

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INTRODUCTION

Evaluation is a process not only to find out to what extent we are achieving stated objectives, but to guide us in improving the training. To paraphrase Edward Lindeman's comments on evaluation:

We may evaluate not to reward or punish, but to help set more adequate goals and to discover more effective methods of achieving them. . . . If evaluation is to serve as a means of improving our activities, we need to go beyond the common conception that evaluation is merely finding out to what extent we are achieving the results we want. We must learn what is wrong and bring performance up to expectations.

It is in this frame of reference that this evaluation has been done. The objective of the evaluation is to determine if the session has added significantly to participants' understanding and skill in decision making. This includes communication and perception skills, interpersonal styles, and models for decision making.

The evaluation instrument, a questionnaire, was administered at the close of the conference. It sought to measure the degree to which the sessions achieved the objectives of the conference. These were:

1. To provide an understanding of the process of decision making in terms of:
 - **Communication:** When we attempt to transfer our meanings to others, we do so not only verbally and symbolically but also nonverbally, through a continuous body language.
 - **Perception and attitudes:** How we view each other in terms of assumptions we make about each other is vitally important in decision making. Common perceptions facilitate decision making.

2. To provide an understanding of the range of specific decision making models and techniques.

More specifically, the evaluation sought to determine in detail understanding and achievement in the following areas:

- a. Communication concepts.
- b. Interpersonal styles in decision making.
- c. Decision making models.
- d. Personnel relations and styles of management.

Special concern was given to participants' views of the conference in terms of:

- a. The learning they had gained from the conference.
- b. Their satisfaction with the ideas and techniques presented.
- c. The value they saw in these ideas and techniques.
- d. The likelihood of their using these ideas and techniques in future board meetings.

The following is a report based on the data collected at the Third Annual Supervisory Board Conference in Cheyenne, Wyoming, May 24-26, 1972.

GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Among the prime objectives of the conference was the presentation and discussion of ideas and techniques related to interpersonal perception, communication, and decision making processes. In order to assess the degree to which the conference provided a positive learning experience in these areas, an evaluation questionnaire was distributed at the close of the session. Fifty-seven participants responded to the questionnaire; about 40 percent of these responses were from Supervisory Board members and the remainder was divided nearly equally between SPA and LEAA personnel.

Table 1 shows a tabulation of the participants' ratings concerning their general satisfaction with the conference. Almost 90 percent said they were satisfied, and a significant proportion of these indicated a high degree of satisfaction. On the other hand, about 10 percent were not satisfied, including two respondents who indicated a high degree of dissatisfaction. The ratio of those very satisfied to those very dissatisfied was 12 to 1, suggesting that although some were not able to benefit from

Table 1

General Satisfaction with Conference		
	Number	Percent
Very Satisfied	24	42.11
Moderately Satisfied	26	45.61
Neutral	2	3.51
Moderately Dissatisfied	3	5.26
Very Dissatisfied	2	3.51
Total Number Responding	57	

the conference, the overwhelming majority found it to be a worthwhile experience.

Since one of the main objectives of the conference was to foster new learning and insights into the decision making process, the evaluation questionnaire contained several items related to new learning, the factors contributing to either a positive or negative learning experience, and the usefulness of the approaches learned during the conference. Figure 1 presents graphically the participants' ratings concerning the amount they learned about decision making, and Figure 2 shows how they rated the amount of learning gained during this conference in relation to the amount learned at similar conferences. Taken together, these figures give an indication of the success or failure of the methods used in providing the participants with insights into the decision making process.

Figure 1

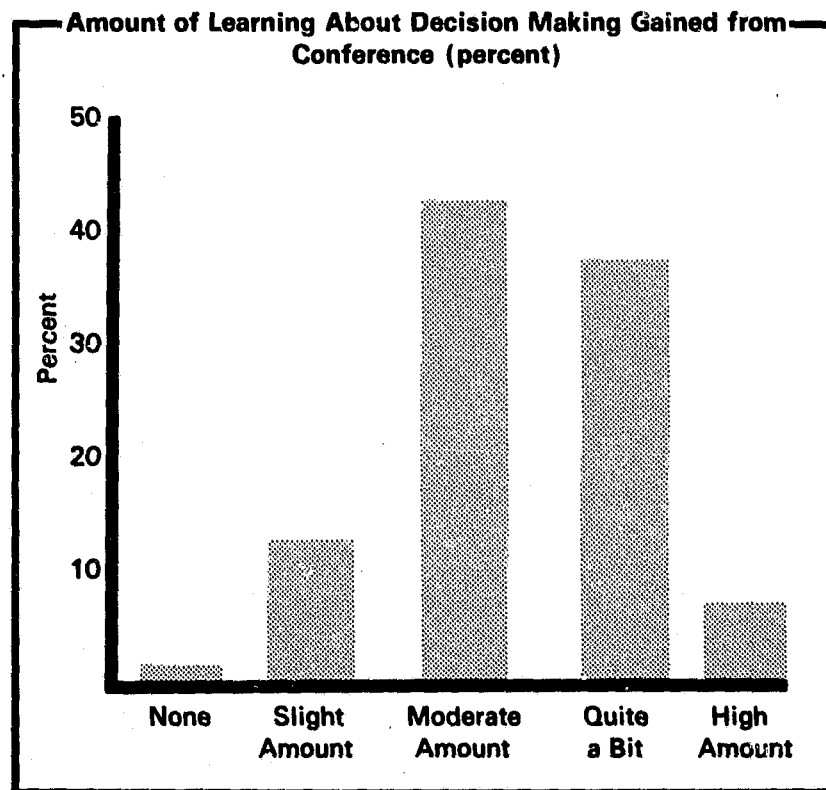
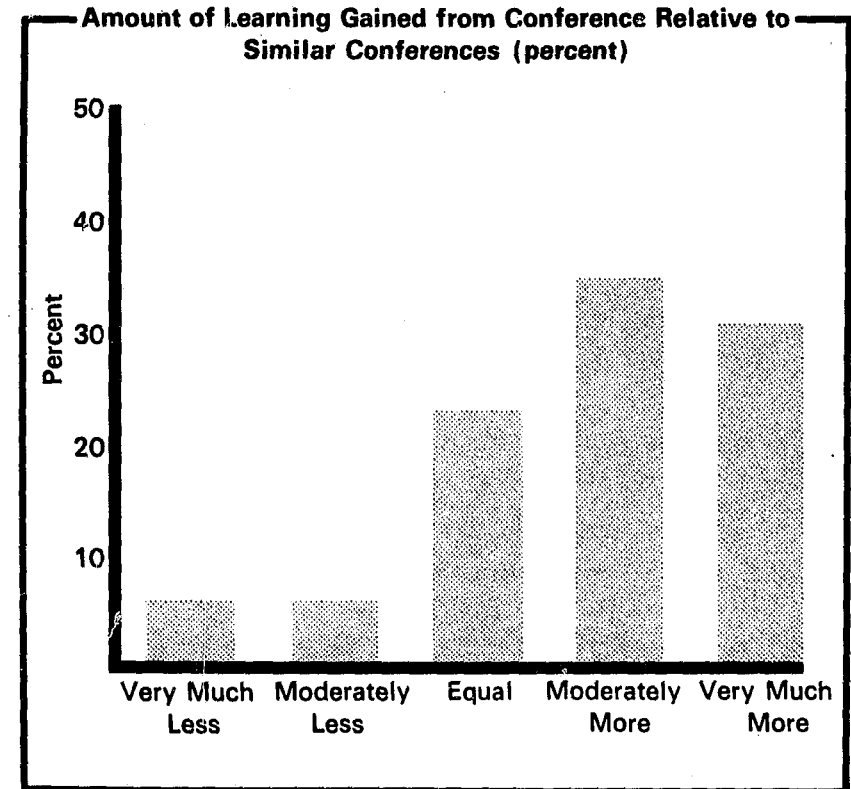


Figure 2



It can be seen from Figure 1 that over one-third of the participants responding felt they had attained quite a bit of new learning; and an additional 42 percent, a moderate amount. More significantly, slightly more than 30 percent reported "very much more" learning compared to similar conferences attended. In total, about two-thirds rated this conference as providing relatively greater learning, and only about one-tenth of the participants indicated there was less.

In an open-ended item, the participants indicated the factors which contributed to a positive or negative learning experience. The positive factors, listed in order of decreasing frequency with which they were mentioned, were

1. Previous lack of knowledge about the decision making process.
2. Skill and competence of the conference instructors and leaders.
3. The fact that the methods used during the conference facilitated participation and communication on the part of those attending.

4. The conference provided for self-insight and increasing awareness of the problems and importance of communication.
5. Other comments, including the large variety of concepts that were presented and the opportunity for applying them to real-life situations.

In addition, a number of participants mentioned specific concepts which they had found particularly useful. (These are discussed in more detail below.)

It is interesting to note that the most frequently encountered comment was that the participant had very little previous knowledge of the actual interpersonal process by which decisions are reached. Thus, it appears that conferences of this sort do in fact address themselves to needs perceived by those attending them.

The comments indicating negative factors, which interfered with making the conference maximally beneficial, were (in order of descending frequency)

1. The concepts were not new.
2. There was a lack of relation to practical applications.
3. The concepts were oversimplified and details were omitted.
4. Other comments, including too much material presented in too short a time, and poor preparation and incompetence on the part of the conference leaders.

Although there were many more positive than negative comments, the negative commenters often complained of a lack of immediate relevance of the material; the concepts appeared too theoretical for these individuals. One individual said he was "bored with the academic approach." This may represent a serious shortcoming in the methods used for certain individuals. In fact, those who were most favorable about the conference said they benefited because of increased awareness, insight, and understanding—even these individuals did not cite immediate applications to a specific situation as the major skill they acquired. It appears that people who can benefit from this type of material, and who are able to provide *their own* specific applications for it, will be most favorable to this type of conference.

It is paradoxical that while one of the most frequent favorable comments dealt with the competence of the leaders, there were also a small number of rather negative comments. Perhaps the explanation is as simple as "you can't liked by everybody," but another possibility is that there was an interaction between how an individual responded to the *method* a leader was employing, and how that individual perceived

the competence of the leader. In other words, the methods of presentation used during the conference often involved some unusual techniques, and it cannot be expected that every individual will benefit from every technique.

Be that as it may, it appears from the responses described, seen in conjunction with the table and figures presented, that a large percentage of the participants were able to learn useful concepts and approaches to the decision making process, and in general there was considerable satisfaction with the conference.

In a listing which the participants made on the questionnaire specifying the three most useful ideas or techniques they encountered, the most frequently mentioned dealt with communication, cooperation, interpersonal relations, and/or self-understanding. These were closely following by the notions of decision by consensus and force field. There were many others mentioned, but the above represent the ones which participants felt would be most useful to them in their home settings. Asked to indicate in what way these ideas would be of use, the respondents listed (in order of decreasing frequency):

1. Better able to work with and communicate with people and/or utilize their strengths in a group interaction.
2. Be more objective, help in analyzing and solving problems and in developing priorities and plans.
3. The ideas presented fostered self-insight and self-change.
4. Other comments, including better able to persuade people, and better able to assess whether a decision should go unchallenged.

Thus, most of the responses stressed the communication aspect and the understanding of other people's point of view; the responses appeared to indicate that many participants left the conference with a feeling of greater objectivity about the entire decision making process. A few, gratifyingly, said they would be more considerate of other people's ideas.

Rarely, a comment was encountered to the effect that the individual would go home with nothing of use, and one participant said the most useful thing he learned was to "ignore WICHE." Although the frequency of such responses was very small, they represent a serious problem. No doubt for these individuals the conference failed.

ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL AREAS

Interpersonal Styles in Decision Making— A Videotape Session

This session generated a wide variety of reactions and, in addition, perhaps a certain degree of emotion. A very large number of participants was very enthusiastic, as Table 2 shows, but a sizable minority was not. The reason most frequently given for dissatisfaction with the experience concerned technical problems with the videotape itself (e.g., "videotape broke down"). It was also mentioned that the group discussion seemed petty and over minor issues. Also occasionally encountered were such comments as: "group too large," "not enough time," "took too long," "cameraman not filming speaker," and so forth.

In attempting an interpretation of the negative comments, one gets the impression that because they seem to show very little pattern and

Table 2

Satisfaction with, and Value of, Videotape Experience (percent)			
Satisfaction		Value	
Very Satisfied	44%	Very Valuable	22%
Moderately Satisfied	30%	Quite Valuable	45%
Neutral	12%	Moderately Valuable	12%
Moderately Dissatisfied	10%	Slightly Valuable	16%
Very Dissatisfied	4%	Little or No Value	5%
Total No. Responding	50		51

were somewhat unrelated to the central meaning of the experience, they may be indicative of a general, perhaps vague uneasiness on the part of a number of the participants concerning being videotaped. One comment, which is probably most to the point, was "didn't like playing the game."

Those who were favorable seemed, on the other hand, highly satisfied with the experience and found it quite valuable. The open-ended comments left no doubt as to the most commonly perceived benefit: self-awareness—to "see oneself as others see one." This type of comment was reported by 40 percent of the respondents and was most striking in its consistency. Interestingly, the next most frequently given comment was reported by 15 percent of the participants, and that was to the effect that the videotape experience provided insight into group processes, roles, and styles. It is somewhat disappointing that the main educational function (at least on the surface) of the session was relegated to a somewhat poor second place in the perception of the participants, even among those who were quite enthusiastic about the experience.

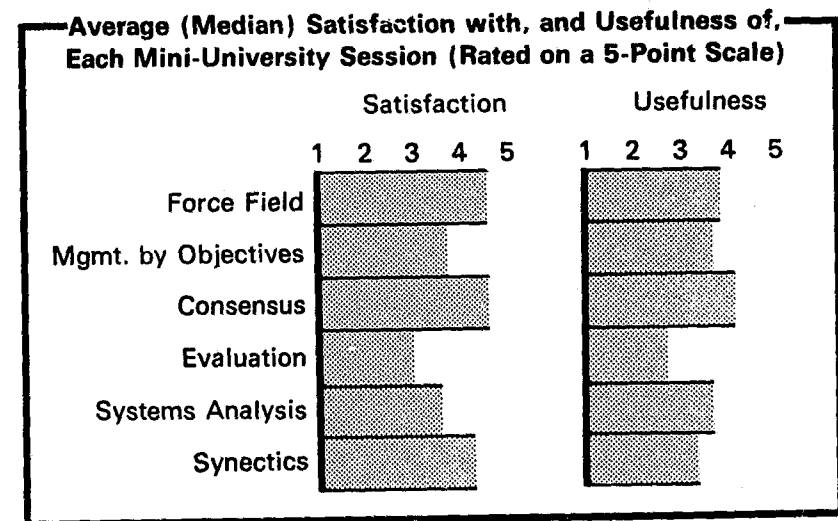
To hazard an interpretation: the videotape technique is one which can be somewhat emotional for the participants. Those who are favorably impressed with it seem to attain an increase in self-awareness. Some individuals, however, do not respond positively to the experience for one reason or another. Perhaps it can be somewhat disconcerting to see oneself as others see one; perhaps it is somewhat anxiety-producing as well as being potentially enlightening. In any case, for the majority of the individuals who liked the experience, as well as for those who did not, the main point of the session (that of providing insight into group dynamics) may have been somewhat overshadowed by the power of the technique itself in fostering self-awareness. Certainly the latter is a valuable function in itself, but the comments definitely force an awareness of its possible side effects.

The Mini-University Sessions

The participants rated each of the six Mini-University sessions on a five-point scale in terms of (a) their general satisfaction with the material and experiences and (b) how useful they believed each will be in future decision making situations. The results are shown in Figure 3. In this figure, the average (median) ratings are shown for each Mini-University session.

On the "satisfaction" scale, a rating of 1 corresponds to "very dissatisfied," a 3 indicates neutrality, and a 5 indicates "very satisfied." On the "usefulness" scale, a 1 indicates "useless," a 3 indicates a

Figure 3

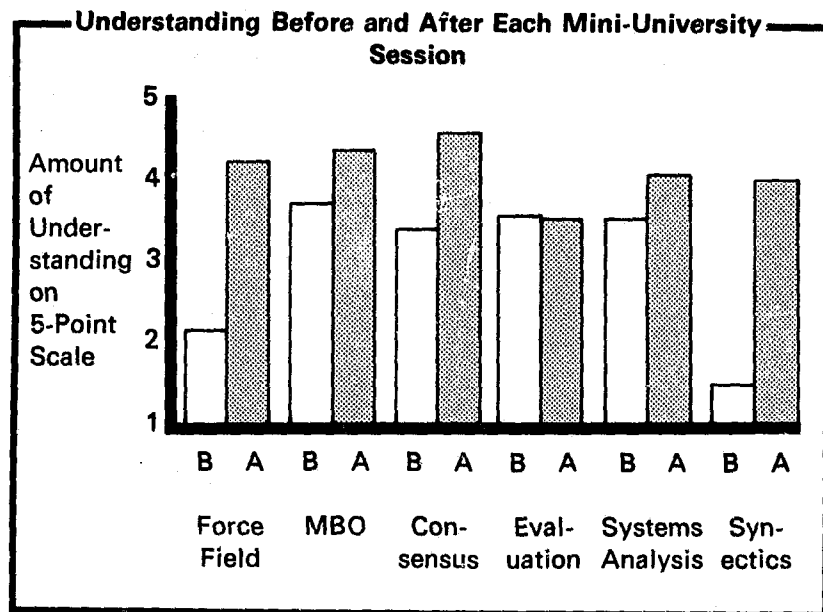


moderate usefulness, and a rating of 5 corresponds to "very useful." Thus, in both cases, the higher the rating the more positively did the respondent perceive the experience.

It can be readily seen that the evaluation session was both least satisfying and least useful. The sessions dealing with management by objectives and systems analysis were rated, on the average, only slightly above neutral in terms of satisfaction. On the other hand, the force field and consensus sessions received very high ratings in both satisfaction with the experience and potential usefulness in future decision making situations. From these graphs, as well as from other comments made to open-ended questionnaire items, it appears that the ideas presented in these two sessions had the widest appeal and were the most beneficial. The evaluation session must be viewed as something of a failure in terms of the general response, although a small minority still found it very satisfying (14 percent) and very useful (8 percent). This would suggest that in future conferences an evaluation session should be reworked rather than abandoned.

Another way of looking at the response to these sessions is represented in Figure 4. The graph shows the average amount of understanding of the concepts both before and after attending the session, thus giving an indication of change due to exposure to the various ideas. Again the ratings were made on a five-point scale, with 5 representing "good understanding" and 1 corresponding to "no understanding."

Figure 4



The evaluation session showed no change in understanding, no doubt accounting for the poor response to it noted above. The largest *increase* in understanding appeared to be in the areas of synectics and force field, while the greatest *amount* of understanding was achieved in the consensus session.

In general, the Mini-University session appeared to be fairly well received. In response to an open-ended item, 50 percent of those responding indicated that they had gained a valuable new insight into the old truth that different people view things in different ways. Many said that as a result of the sessions on communication they had learned to "listen" better. Also common was a reference to the group process, and how interpersonal relationships affect decisions. Many noted that the sessions provided them with an increased sensitivity to other people, to their personal styles and to their feelings.

Optional Sessions

Table 3 shows the ratings for the optional evening sessions on communication. In general, those who attended appeared to respond positively, with about 50 percent finding their session either "quite" or "very" valuable.

Table 3

	Percent
Very Valuable	17
Quite Valuable	32
Moderately Valuable	37
Slightly Valuable	12
Of No Value	2
	<hr/> 100

Additional comments indicated that there were two main ways in which these sessions were judged to have been of value:

1. In terms of increasing self-awareness of one's relationships with others and one's own style of decision making.
2. In terms of understanding the decision making process itself more clearly and how communication and interpersonal relationships in general affect the process.

These two ways appear to be getting at essentially similar concepts, the first from a more personal point of view, and the second more in terms of general principles. It is interesting to note that approximately two-thirds of the comments listed the first of these two, which suggests that the participants tended to view the principles presented in a personal matter. Hopefully, this means that many left the conference with the sense of personal applicability and, as some noted, an orientation toward "self-appraisal."

Action Agenda

Finally, the participants indicated on the questionnaire whether or not they thought they would use the ideas and techniques learned during the conference in their future work. Of the 47 individuals who responded to this question, 45 (about 96 percent) said "yes" and 2 said "no." In elaborating their response, the most frequently encountered comment of those who said "yes" mentioned more effective communication and improved working relationships with people in future decision making. A number of participants referred to specific ideas presented during the conference, such as the notion of consensus in decision

making, as being especially applicable to their future work. Looking ahead, one individual concluded that the conference "showed the value, and need, of some similar sessions in the future."

Of the two individuals who said "no," only one gave a reason: "I deal with facts."

CONCLUSION:

The foregoing is an attempt to deal with facts—facts admittedly "different" from those of the physical sciences. A fact, however, is no less a fact because it is a person's impression about his experience. Despite its "softness," this kind of fact is the stuff of the behavioral sciences.

Facts are less a problem than the generalizations projected from them. This report has sought to avoid overgeneralizations and has dealt with the available facts in a concrete fashion. Our attempt to use Supervisory Board Conference participant responses in a meaningful manner to assess the effectiveness of the conference is done with a strong feeling of restraint and discipline. It is this restraint and discipline that keeps this evaluation report from reaching beyond the data to unwarranted conclusions. Conclusions to be drawn remain the domain of the reader.

END