



Training, Inc.

A Holistic Approach to Job Training

Training, Inc. is a whole person approach to job training program which focuses on the individual 's total employability. The program was originally designed and staffed by individuals from the Institute of Cultural Affairs who embraced the concept and philosophy of "Imaginal Education." The number of ICA trained staff who worked in the programs for varying lengths of time grew to over 50 as the program model was replicated in multiple locations over several years. It quickly became an award-winning program for its excellent retention to graduation and job placement rates (see **Training, Inc.: A practical application of imaginal education.**).

"Training, Inc. taught me more than I bargained for. I learned more about myself than any other place has shown me. Training, Inc. was a chance for me to examine my life. I came to realize how low my self-esteem and self-confidence were. I think the real answer lies within us but many times we refuse to see it. Training, Inc. woke me up and took me out of my cocoon. The one I created. It helped me gain back my self-confidence."

~~ Training, Inc. Graduate

It all began in 1974 with a request by business leaders from the Oak Brook Association of Commerce and Industry in DuPage County, Illinois. The business leaders needed an effective short-term job training program to prepare unemployed and underemployed DuPage County residents for available office jobs. The group selected an inner-city educational institution, the Central YMCA Community College in nearby Chicago, to design and staff the program in Oak Brook and to apply for job training funds from the DuPage County Office of Employment and Training to run the program. The Institute of Cultural Affairs' innovative approach to education was known to the College. After the grant was awarded, the College hired a small group of ICA educators to design the program and provide the training staff to deliver the program in Oak Brook. four

A **1980 report** prepared for the sponsors provides early history and results from the first four years of the DuPage County program and the first year of the replicated program in downtown Chicago. A national award was given in 1980 by the US Department of Labor. Training, Inc. was selected as one of the Top Ten Exemplary Job Training programs in the country. A research team was sent by the DOL to document the program's elements of success. One of the conclusions mentioned in **Department of Labor report** was as follows:

“Finally, the training curriculum of the program should be credited for much of the program’s success. Program staff refer to the training as ‘Imaginal Education’. This approach to training centers on self-image development. It is based on the assumption that when students effectively deal with basic operating images which have reinforced their lack of skill and uncertainty in employment relationships, they have met the major part of the challenge of career preparation.”

In 1986 the Training, Inc. National Association (TINA) was formed to document success factors and foster expansion. The TINA listed a number of **local and national awards** that occurred over a 15-year period of time. By this point programs were established in Chicago, Boston, Indianapolis, Newark, Pittsburgh and Washington DC. Various program replications used different names such as Fifth City Business Careers in Chicago or Training Futures in Northern Virginia while others include the sponsor’s name along with Training, Inc. such as YMCA Training, Inc. Each program is totally independent but all are based on the essential practices of the original Training, Inc. model. They each create their own timelines, curriculum, job skills and special events. The program evolved and grew over the years through the creativity of the staff and sponsors in each location as they endeavor to meet the changing needs of the trainees and business community.

The Training, Inc. National Association published a one-page compilation of the **“Essential Practices: Strategies for Success”** in 2015. The essential practices included Workplace Simulations, Learning Organizations and Collaborative Partnerships. These are outlined below along with links to Statements, Reports, Articles, Curriculum, and Research in these areas. They come from a variety of sources and the names of authors are shared with each item.

Work Place Simulation

Work place simulations have been a core element of Training, Inc.’s success from the start. The teaching tool has been recognized for a long time. Sophocles in 400 BC said, *“One must learn by doing the thing, for though you think you know it —you have no certainty, until you try.”* The real world is experienced as a the whole and the simulation environment allows trainees to get beyond the boundaries of individual academic subject areas and see how they and their vocational journey fit into the big picture. A simulation provides an opportunity to learn by doing as new skills are applied in a realistic job environment.

“I love the atmosphere. I’ve been through other training things, through... other jobs. And this one here is very supportive. And it makes learning so much easier. You don’t feel threatened or criticized and you just go at your own pace. And it gives you better belief in yourself. And it just... it helps you see life. It just makes you see like there’s a light down at the end of that tunnel when I get there. And it’s very bright. And it’s just like every day I wake up and it’s like I can’t wait to get here.”

--Training Futures participant
describing the training

An excellent description of the use and intent of simulation at Training, Inc. was written for a Public/Private Ventures publication in **“Hard Work on Soft Skills; Creating a ‘Culture of Work’ in Work Force Development”** (see pages 25-35). The article on Simulations at Training, Inc. and a slideshow for **“Simulation Pilot Training”** was authored by the Boston YMCA Training, Inc. They also updated and made available their newest office simulation, **JK Distributors: Business simulation to enhance job retention**, which was created by their staff in a collaboration between the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston and the Training, Inc. National Association.

Learning Organization

Training, Inc. focuses on the individual’s **total employability**. Proficiency in job skills is extremely important, but so are intangible or soft skills such as confidence, being a problem solver, pride in one’s work, appropriate dress, and ethical business relationships. An **ICA Trainer: Curriculum faculty manual** provided training in Imaginal Education rationales and techniques for new trainers. A speech describing **Imaginal Theory and Goals** was given for training purposes also. It is a working copy but a must read in understanding how the concept is used in the program.

The training program “creates a highly-intentional, planned cycle of success which involves a quality of environment that instills positive thinking to re-build one’s self-image and results in confidence and courage to continue the process. Changed lives are the credibility of the program. Ask any graduate.” There are many stories by and about graduates of the programs.

Collaborative Partnerships

One business leader remarked,

“Training, Inc., by developing neglected human potential, is assisting business, educational institutions, private and governmental agencies in meeting the employment challenges facing us today and in the future.”

Training, Inc. would not have even been created without collaborative partnerships making it possible; and the number of partners has grown over the years. Partners include employers, educational institutions, community service providers, volunteers from faith communities, service clubs, professional organizations, the networking of other programs to share ideas, and graduates of the program. There are annual reports, newspaper articles, letters, and foundation reports that indicate many ways these groups participate and enrich the trainee experience.

“In this your tenth anniversary, the joint efforts of government, private organizations and businesses have given all of Chicago a reason to celebrate. I personally feel that the solution to many of our economic problems is precisely this type of private-public cooperation. I would like to thank the staff and sponsors of Training, Inc. for a magnificent job well done.” (Chicago Mayor)

In 2007 The Aspen Institute selected sponsors of Training Futures in Northern Virginia (a program that gives college credit for the courses taught at Training Futures) to receive a **\$300,000 grant** to study the program and how it combines employment and higher education opportunities. They were also greatly impressed by the level of participation by the business community. They wrote, “This partnership was picked for several reasons: We see great promise in the model—one that can be used nationwide.”

The Staff

“We teach what we are, not just what we say. We teach our own self-concepts more often than we teach our subject matter.” Staff



The staff at Training, Inc. programs bring 3 qualities: proficiency in skills from years of experience in the areas they teach; professionalism and an expectation of excellence; and commitment to enabling every trainee to be a winner through the application of imaginal education methods.

Pictured here are staff and graduates from one class of the more than 26,000 graduates who

“took the journey toward personal transformation at Training, Inc. and were helped to believe in themselves and know they have something to contribute”.

Staff