

CREATIVE MANAGEMENT

Employee screening

Using Hollywood films to teach people how to lead

BY AMY ALEXANDER

When Bill Phillips wants to help new supervisors understand how they might get through to their teams, he uses a little bit of Hollywood magic. The president of Career Assessment Services, a career development firm in Baton Rouge, dims the lights and has his students watch the 1986 film "Hoosiers," starring Gene Hackman.

The practice of using movies to teach management is gaining popularity in training and development circles around the country. Phillips is among the first trainers in Baton Rouge to take it up. At the Louisiana Society for Human Resource Management's annual conference in Baton Rouge recently, Phillips talked to a group of about 100 human resources executives about how he uses feature films such as "Hoosiers" to teach complex management lessons and subtle leadership techniques.

More than entertainment

Why do films work so well to teach management? While companies probably wouldn't use a movie to teach a new computer program or accounting method, motion pictures are tops for tutoring people in the rocky terrain of human relations, Phillips says.

"A how-to book just can't encompass complex human nature, and that's what movies really tend to do," he says. "They really help us understand what makes people tick and the human dynamics that are going on."

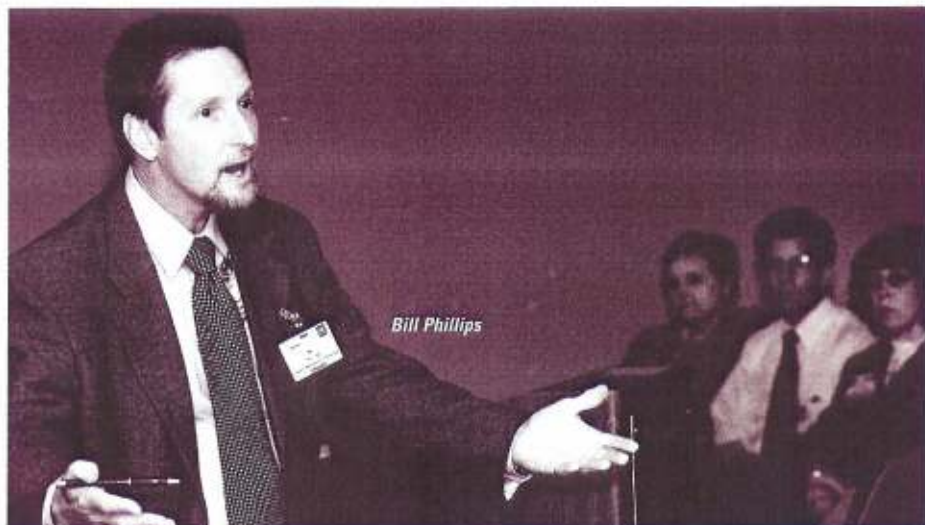
Take "Hoosiers."
"Management 101 would say, 'Listen and try to understand what's going on and build relationships with people, then develop a plan and get on board,'" he says.

But Hackman's character, Norman Dale, lacks the leadership finesse taught at Harvard. It's his way or the highway, which, as it turns out, is exactly what the firm's down-and-out team, and town, need.

"Although he came in as an outsider, he had the vision for what it was going to take for them to be winners again," Phillips says.

Such a film, Phillips says, can do much more than books written by even the brightest minds.

"The complexity comes through," he says. Some of Phillips' favorite films for teaching leadership include "Apollo 13" because it shows how to lead top performers, and "Jerry Maguire" because it illustrates the importance of having a mission but also shows that, once a company states its mis-



Management at the movies

Movie	What it teaches
"The Wizard of Oz"	<i>Taking responsibility.</i> Dorothy and team succeed only when they stop pinning hopes on the wizard.
"Citizen Kane"	<i>Ego.</i> Kane's problems are due to his huge ego.
"Remember the Titans"	<i>Diversity.</i> A Virginia football coach faces racial tension as he integrates his team.
"Dead Poet's Society"	<i>Perspective.</i> An English teacher urges his students to see things from a different view.

Source: moviesforbusiness.com, John Clemens, Janelle Barlow

sion, it still takes a lot of hard work—and luck—to make it fly.

And ... action!

The best films for teaching management feature a number of different lessons, says John Clemens, founder and executive director of the Humanities in Management Institute at Hartwick College in Oneonta, N.Y.

In 1997, Clemens and his staff received a \$1 million grant from the Kellogg Foundation to study how films might best be used to teach management, he says.

Clemens and his team at the Hartwick Institute recommend taking time to get to know a particular scene.

First, watch the scene closely and

take detailed notes, he instructs. Listen carefully to the words that are spoken and try not to get lost in the entertainment of the film. What are the actors doing? Treat their behavior with the same attention that you would apply to a case study in an MBA program.

Translate the observations you've made into insights for leadership. What is the underlying tactic taking place? Finally, turn that tactic into action.

Movies also work for teaching other people-oriented business principles such as customer service.

Janelle Barlow, president of TMI, U.S., a management consulting company based in Las Vegas, uses a scene from "Terms of Endearment" to illustrate the frustration customers experi-

ence when they are ignored.

In the scene, Shirley MacLaine goes berserk because hospital staff won't give her daughter, who is dying of cancer, enough pain medication.

"The reason why customers go out-of-control is not because they are nasty people, but because somebody is not listening to them," Barlow says.

There's no usage fee for companies that use films for in-house training, but Clemens says they must pay royalties to production companies, anywhere from \$200 to \$2,000, for using the films with clients who pay for the advice.

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