



TRAINING MEDIA REVIEW *by trainers, for trainers*

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ABOUT THE STAR RATINGS

Outstanding	4
Very good	3.5
Good	3
Above average	2.5
Average	2
Below average	1.5
Poor	1

TRAINING MEDIA REVIEW provides objective reviews of training content and supporting technologies, advice on media-related training issues, research reports, and consulting.

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THE ABILENE PARADOX, Second Edition, video, 2002, 26 min., CRM Learning (800-421-0833, www.crmlearning.com), VHS and DVD, \$995. Leader Guide, participant workbook (10 copies), PowerPoint slides. Online preview (requires registration): www.crmlearning.com

By Cindy Huggett

Have you ever stopped to think about how you got to where you are now? What series of decisions you made that brought you to this point, this place, or this situation? Were you active and deliberate in your decision making, or did you simply “go with the flow”?

If your passive participation in group decisions led you to your destination, then you may be a victim of the Abilene Paradox. This video training program examines the “paradox of mismanaged agreement,” which often occurs when groups make decisions.



We learn about the Abilene Paradox on a hot summer day on the front porch of a home in Texas. Dr. Jerry Harvey recalls a family visit that turns into a road trip to Abilene. Upon returning home, the family discovers that no one wanted to go to Abilene in the first place, but everyone went along for the ride. Through the events of that particular day, viewers learn about the Abilene Paradox and how to recognize when this type of group decision happens.

The concepts are reinforced through two other stories, a corporate situation and a young couple's pending nuptials. The video sequences are logical and easy to follow, and Dr. Harvey's narration explains everything well. We learn what the Abilene Paradox means, how it happens, the reasons behind it, and most importantly, how to avoid it.

From an entertainment standpoint, I thoroughly enjoyed the video story. Although the content is the most important part of any training program, it's hard to argue with the importance of entertainment value, especially in a 26-minute video that is longer than most of today's TV sitcoms! The video is well produced and has a high-quality production quality and convincing acting.

CRM Learning should be commended for their attention to detail in this training package. They included the original version of *The Abilene Paradox* on the videotape, “for maximum



flexibility.” I was impressed with this consideration for organizations that might be used to the original and need to continue using it for various reasons. Other small but important details include the availability of closed captioning, and the availability of both DVD and VHS formats.

The complete training package includes the video program, facilitator PowerPoint slides on CD-ROM, a poster to hang on the classroom wall, Post-It notepads for participants (illustrated with the phrase “Skip the Trip!”), and pocket “Skip the Trip!” reminder cards. The spiralbound Leader Guide is thorough, and even a brand new trainer can follow the directions to deliver a high-impact training program. The guide outlines a four-hour session with five group exercises plus three optional activities for a longer workshop. The participant workbook rounds out the program and includes worksheets for each group activity.

RECOMMENDATION

Reflecting on your own life or the life of your organization, you will probably find examples of the Abilene Paradox. If this video training program will help your organization “skip the trip” to Abilene at least once, then it will be worth your while. The fact that CRM updated this program to a second edition illustrates the program’s popularity and its first run success. I believe the second run will be just as successful.

Cindy Huggett (chuggett@nc.rr.com) is an independent learning and performance consultant specializing in classroom facilitation. She is based in Raleigh, NC. Her past roles include a one-person training department for an international mechanical contractor and director of training for a software training company.

**The Abilene Paradox
product ratings**

CATEGORY	
Holds viewer interest	4
Acting/Presenting	4
Diversity	3.5
Production quality	4
Value of content	3.5
Instructional value	3.5
Value for the money	3.5
Overall rating	4