

The Best Return on Investment



Peter V. Handal

EDITORS' NOTE Peter Handal joined the company in 1999 and was elected President and CEO in 2000. He was elected Chairman in 2005. Handal is CEO of J4P Associates, a real estate concern in Baltimore, where he is also active as a developer. Previously, he was President of COWI International Group; CEO of a children's wearing apparel and accessories company marketed under the "Just 4 Kids" brand; and worked at Exxon Corporation in the Treasurer's and New Investments Departments. Handal's not-for-profit activities include the Lott Community Development Corporation, The Cardinal Cooke Guild, and The Metropolitan Opera Club, where he recently served as President. Handal is a member of the U.S. Government's Industry Trade Advisory Committee for Distribution Services. He has a B.A. from Georgetown University and an M.B.A. from the University of Chicago.

COMPANY BRIEF Dale Carnegie Training (www.dalecarnegie.com) is the oldest training company in the world, originally based on Dale Carnegie's world famous best seller, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Dale Carnegie has more than 290 offices in over 80 countries on six continents and partners with middle market and large corporations and organizations to produce measurable business results by improving "soft skills," with emphasis on employee engagement, leadership, sales, team building and interpersonal relations, customer service, public speaking, and presentations, as well as other essential non-technical management skills. The company includes as its clients 400 of the Fortune 500 companies.

John D. Rockefeller Sr. once said he would pay more to hire someone who would get along with other people than he would a genius. That is what you do – you teach people to get along with other people.

That is the essence of the Dale Carnegie experience. It goes back to the book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, written by Mr. Carnegie.

**An Interview with Peter V. Handal,
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Dale Carnegie Training**

You call it the Dale Carnegie experience?

The Dale Carnegie experience is what takes place in the training room with the people in the classes. We have had a hard time trying to describe it because it's partly psychological and partly changing behavior, but we have settled on the phrase, the Dale Carnegie experience.

Your market base is companies that send employees to you to learn to not just be better people but better salesmen.

Better leaders, presenters, salespeople, and customer service people. It's all based on people.

Is the course available only in the U.S. or throughout the world?

Throughout the world. When Dale Carnegie started in 1912, he was one man on 125th Street at the YMCA in Harlem giving lectures and talking about how to get along with people.

Fast forward 100 years and we have more than 290 offices in over 80 countries training in 30 languages via 2,700 trainers. In that 100 years, we estimate we have trained over eight million people.

Some of the most famous people in the world have taken your course?

Yes, Warren Buffett, Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan, Mary Kay, J.W. Marriott, Lyndon Johnson, Sam Walton who founded Walmart – it's a remarkable list.

Do employees come to you because their corporation recommends it or because they feel there is something lacking in themselves that needs strengthening?

In the beginning, employees of companies or people that were changing positions would come to the Dale Carnegie course as individuals, and for the most part, they paid for it themselves.

Now, 95 percent of our business is corporate organized and paid for. It follows two different patterns: the companies will either send people as a way of improving customer service or we do business with companies that pay for an employee to improve himself as an individual – we do a lot of business that way as part of fringe benefit packages.

The president of a bank in China recently told me that they think we are wonderful. I asked, what is your return on investment? He told me that we train their branch managers, assistant branch managers, and the people that interface with the clients. They saw substantial increase in profitability after the training, which they feel is a result of our training and the improvement in customer service that resulted from it.

Do trainers come ready-made and full of spirit or do you put them through a Dale Carnegie course of their own?

We have a very intensive training process for trainers; it's a major part of what we do from a corporate perspective, because people have to have the right personality and the interest in other people.

Those in training do tandems with other established trainers to see how the process works. After a period of time, if they are successful, we will clear them to train. If they are cleared, they become trainers who periodically go through refresher training, because they can get tired and stale and we have to make sure people are up with the latest techniques.

Is the person who thinks his glass is half empty a perfect candidate for your program?

That is one type, but it's also the person who wants to sell more, including selling himself. In order to have an engaged workforce, managers need to sell themselves. People don't leave companies – they leave managers. If you have a manager who engages the employees and is people-centered, turnover goes way down and the productivity goes way up.

So the reason why people would come to a Dale Carnegie course is because they want to do a better job in the workplace or perhaps find a job.

One of our clients said that not only are his employees more productive at work following our training, but they go home and get along better with their wives and children, which means they come back to work happier.

What in particular surprises you about the success of this business?

When I joined the company in late 1999, I was fascinated to find that it works all over the world, because everywhere in the world, we teach the same thing – the only difference is the language and the examples used by the local trainers for the students. But the reason why it works is that despite outward appearances, people everywhere are the same at their core.

You're a very positive person. Were you always this way?

When I was five years old, I had serious asthma – I almost died twice. I had to go to the doctor every six months. In those days, they thought asthma was psychosomatic so during those visits, the doctor would try to relax me.

The doctor asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, and I said, I want to be happy. So that has always been my strategic plan. ●