

BIO AFTER USAF - Rich Midkiff

In 1989, our daughters were in good schools in Montgomery, so we stayed there when I retired from the Air Force. Turns out my daughters were accomplishing more than I was; I did not prepare very well for civilian jobs. After a rough start, I got a job in education/training for operational government agencies in the State of Alabama.

That turned out very well - 22 years worth. It seems Alabama government needed what I could deliver: supervisor and employee development programs for large agencies. In total, Alabama had 32,000 merit employees spread over the state in numerous agencies. State Personnel had a good trainer they hired away from Auburn University to help them continue their mandated equal employment opportunity programs. There were over 6,000 supervisors state wide who needed the four courses for supervisors; the courses cost the agencies money for enrollment, travel, and per diem. Take turnover into account, and State Personnel could hardly make a dent in the total task of adequate preparation for new supervisors. A few agencies hired their own trainer to make better progress, and as a result I worked for 13 years with Revenue and nine years with Public Welfare (DHR). I learned a lot about taxation and welfare systems for a layman, and I helped those agencies develop supervisors and provide a variety of programs for employees.

The main supervisor course was the state's Performance Appraisal system (think OER's). Two other courses were centered around Alabama Merit System law as well: Employee Discipline, and Legal Hiring. For *Leadership*, I modified Air Force concepts to fit in with Alabama's legal requirements and dovetail with the other three courses. My salary was sunk cost, but I traveled to eight local regions instead of the 900 supervisors traveling to Montgomery; and there was no enrollment cost for the trainees.

For both Revenue and DHR over 22 years:

- Taught customer relations and de-escalation skills to help with hostile customers.
- Consulted with the major operating division trainers on their curriculums and provided tutoring in business writing for a few employees who were barely meeting the standard required for official agency reports.

For Revenue:

- Taught personal computers and networks as they arrived in the early 90's; Revenue got their own computer labs and I helped them set up the instructor's station and taught basic courses: computers, Word, Excel, and Outlook business email to all employees.
- In 1994 I worked with a vendor to set up an off-the-shelf employee training database to keep all training transcripts and requirements (both internal and external courses). From then on, supervisors could get more accurate information on employee development; and we also did data entry to create electronic transcripts from paper ones back to about 1990.
- I wrote personnel policy for approval, edited an existing employee handbook, and, as assistant personnel director, administered the federal FMLA for all employees.
- Taught 'Diversity' with an excellent vendor's product that helped with a department-wide lecture for all employees, and great small-group discussions with supervisors.

For DHR:

- In 2004, refined operation of their existing training database which also started in about 1994. In 2008, was appointed 'lead end user' to buy a modern Learning Management System (LMS) for the department. All employees could receive e-training via desktop in their office without having to travel. All supervisors and above could see transcripts for their direct reports as well as a personalized list of required upcoming courses for each employee. This was the first LMS in Alabama Executive Government. I also taught a 2-day curriculum design course to 22 in-house trainers so they could begin to convert part of their classroom courses to online events.

- I modified three of my courses for the LMS. So first, employees took a series of required modules online by a given deadline; second, they participated in two successive 90-minute conference calls with me, as we discussed the last two modules with visuals on their computers; and third, they had to pass the online test for credit. This allowed me to control course sequence and provide three needed courses to new supervisors during their six-month probationary period. The system was expensive the first year. But for years two and three, by eliminating my travel expenses across the agency, that paid the entire cost of the LMS for the five major program divisions who were coming along slowly with their online programs.
- Finally, I was one of two people who helped our Emergency Welfare Officer at Alabama EMA during state-wide emergencies. We had several hurricanes and the very bad tornados that ripped up Tuscaloosa close to the University of Alabama. I filled the night shift, 1830 to 0630 at the Alabama EMA Command Center. That was a unique experience; I provided some help in communications and learned a hell of a lot about FEMA and EMA operations.

To Summarize my 40 years in *agency training*, for both the Air Force and Alabama: I was the direct instructor for over 7,500 trainees (lecture hall, classroom, airplanes, field exercises and virtual class). My unit administered the training for an additional 25,000 trainees (organized the off-site training; scheduled, verified, and recorded training; and paid the bills).

Cheryl and I moved to NC in 2012 to be near our daughters. That has worked out fine, and I stay busy with volunteer activities, including tutoring in a variety of places, and hobbies. Family is doing good! And I had to "adjust" to being un-employed. *CHERYL AND I ON VACATION IN 2012...*

