

ANIMAL SPIRITS

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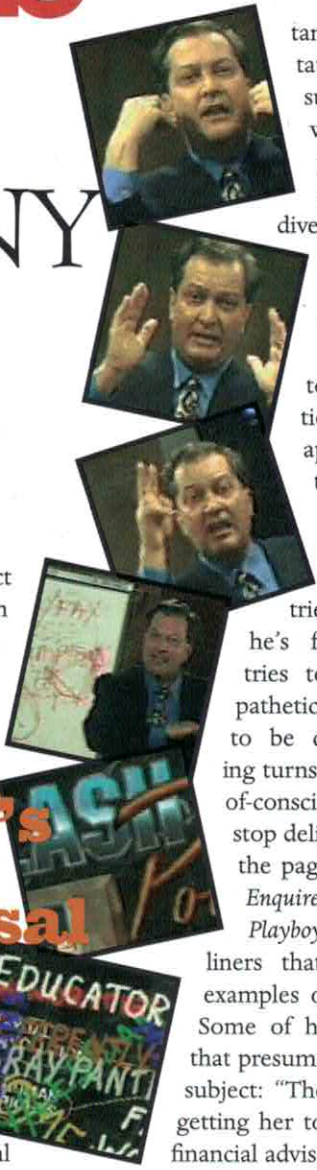
FAST COMPANY FLICKS

Flashpoint—When Values Collide
 Producer: Video Marketing Resources, Inc.
 Running Time: 73 minutes

IMAGINE a 73-minute-long stand-up comedy shtick on the subject of diversity, delivered by Truman Capote on speed, and you've got Morris Massey's "Flashpoint." Truman Capote was a gifted writer. And Morris Massey, whose background is in marketing, is a training-video star. But campy cleverness and pop packaging a diversity guru do not make. And as this video painfully reveals, Massey knows next to nothing about the subject of diversity. Even worse, with a presentation that veers self-indulgently from stand-up comedy to tent revival religiosity to pitchman pop psychology, Massey ends up undermining the legitimacy and seriousness of the whole subject.

Not that Massey's combination of break-neck talking speed and superficiality has prevented this tape from becoming a best-seller. In the \$1.5 billion market for off-the-shelf training videos, books, and classroom materials, diversity has taken off as the topic du jour. The number of diversity "experts" reportedly has more than quadrupled since 1990. In that overcrowded field of consul-

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'There's one universal truth about sex...

...people are horny." And "When Murphy Brown had a baby, Dan Quayle had a cow."

The video training industry is an uncertain infant. No one is sure what makes a good video. There are just as many questions about the audience. What makes an interaction succeed? No one has that answer either. So consider Massey's tape an experiment with a blend of entertainment, inspiration, humor, and shock to get a reaction from his audience. In this case, however, the right reaction is to pull the plug.

Laura Winig

tants, Massey's reputation serves to reassure trainers that when they sit their people down in front of a TV for a diversity session, this offering will be a neat conversation starter.

It's more likely to be a conversation killer. Massey's approach to diversity is to stand in front of a video screen and yell at us. When he tries to be sincere, he's funny. When he tries to be funny, he's pathetic. What he intends to be consciousness-raising turns out to be stream-of-consciousness. His non-stop delivery roams across the pages of the *National Enquirer*, *Variety*, and *Playboy* looking for one-

liners that masquerade as examples of diversity issues. Some of his salient insights that presumably pertain to his subject: "The Duchess of Slut getting her toes sucked by her financial adviser—I don't get it." (Nor do I. What does Fergie have to do with diversity?) Or "There's one universal truth about sex that's hard to ignore: people are horny."

The Manager As Mystic

YOU'RE in your favorite bookstore, scanning the new titles in the business section, looking for something that will help you make sense of the turmoil of competition.



Wrong section! Wrong decade! For the most important management book for the 1990s, try fiction from the 1940s: Hermann Hesse's Nobel Prize-winning novel, *The Glass Bead Game*. It combines leader-as-servant, pragmatic mysticism, creative destruction—in other words, all the business issues of the decade! Plus it's a great read.

The glass bead game itself is a model of innovation, improvisation, and creative synthesis, played within a set of strict rules and regulations. To play the game at the highest levels requires a different, deeper intelligence—intuition and, as Hesse puts it, a "capacity for universality rising above all the disciplines." Mere technicians, those who are content to move pieces on a board, will never rise to the level of the master.

Hesse's protagonist, Joseph Knecht, is the Magister Ludi, the master of the glass bead game, and a model for the manager in the 1990s. He is a new breed of pragmatic intellectual mystic, the kind of leader who would be able to integrate chaos theory as a predictive tool, appreciate digital convergence as a technological force, and listen to the music of the spheres for inspiration.

But like a true master of the game, Knecht can see beyond the walls of his organization. While the other members of the institution have grown complacent and inward looking, Knecht smells danger. His only response can be to rush to put out the fire. In the end, says Hesse, the job of the leader is an urgent one—to transcend!

Paul Saffo

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