

# Educator's Column

## Those Who Can...

*By Kevin F. Pulz, Sr. Producer/Director "Garden Paths" Milwaukee Public TV Chair, TV & Video Production Division, Milwaukee Area Technical College*

I'm certain that you've heard that hackneyed and rather slighting saying about teachers; 'those who can't do, teach'...

Even though (thinking about my own teachers or contemporaries) I admit that I've chuckled at it from time to time, especially the follow-up line, "...and those who can't teach, teach gym!" it's always been an awful dig by those who truly don't get it. Coming from a long-line of educational types growing up in New Jersey (sister and sister-in-law; teachers, brother; school psychologist, uncle; custodian, mother; school secretary... we all were substitute teachers at some point!) it was a phrase that wasn't uttered in our home out of respect. Our reverence for those who educate was second to none.

To be honest, I had no intention on getting myself into education as a career- it just kind of happened that way. I still see myself a 'TV Guy' first, with instructional title and duties attached. I figured after I had my fill of broadcasting, I would then take my experience into the labs, workshops and classrooms. Sure is interesting how life works out sometimes.

But getting back to that phrase... Now that I've spent upwards near 25 years in some form of educational television, the last 20 at the Milwaukee Area Technical College and Milwaukee Public Television as instructor and producer/director, I think I've finally found a way to 'fix' that line so that it become more positive. Utilizing the Wisconsin Governor's 'Frankenstein Veto' tool in reverse, let's stitch something more into that phrase- "Those who can do, <ought to> teach..." Yeah, I like that.

Respectfully circumventing all of the standard ethical and obligatory reasons for encouraging one to commit themselves to the training and stewardship of our young, let's look at it from a more 'what's in it for me as a business' stand-point... stay with me;

This industry is changing... evolving. Maybe more so now than at any point since the late 1940's-early 1950's with the 'freeze' and the adopting of new technical standards that brought about, eventually, color. This evolution is challenging to many educators who are already grappling with the changing face of college-aged students who already have sophisticated computer-related skills and have grown-up not just watching TV, but conquering the web, computer-related gaming, podcasting and the like. This generation sees A LOT of video- much of it on-line (read: youtube) and thusly applies those 'watching' skills and experiences to how they approach their work in our labs. More often than not, this results in not the soundest productions to start. And this is where professionals come in- Besides offering up better examples of programming for emulation via the air, ensure accessibility to those programs not just via alternative delivery methods, but by the most effective way of all: in person. By taking your knowledge, your experience and your talents to this next generation of program producers, you are more likely than not apt to breach the gap that occurs courtesy the anonymous and convenient 'digital divide' that makes a web-surfing generation so comfortable hiding behind their keyboards and IM texting.

Teach a course at your local community or technical college; participate in a career-day at a nearby high school; develop a community seminar in video production and critique as part of your towns' recreation department offerings; take on several interns, college and high-school, at your firm; vigorously pursue guest speaking opportunities at universities or colleges that teach media related courses; offer your professional opinions by vetting broadcast production textbooks (anyone remember Zettl, Burroughs, Wood or Millerson? They're still setting the standards for college production handbooks); volunteer your services and expertise and serve on advisory committees that help schools rework and develop curriculum.

After all, who knows this industry better than you? By involving yourself in any of the above courses of influence you are best ensuring that your needs as broadcasters, producers and programmers are met when that next recent graduate applies for an entry-level position at your place of employ.

At MPTV/MATC we fashion ourselves unique as our TV and Video Production students learn in a working station, filling studio production roles, HD switching, shooting, editing, etc. as part of their studies. Each and every professional contributes to that education as part of his or her daily duties. For instance, I invite students along each time I am field shooting for my "Garden Paths" program; field prompter, lighting, jib, off-line AVID are some of the experiences they receive under this instructors' professional assignments. This relationship helps students learn and professionals grow. Plus it fosters a very strong bond between academics and professional services that has resulted in several dozen students-turned-employees over the years.

Of course few stations or colleges have this sort of professional/educational obligation, but the paradigm is certainly one to be followed in any situation.

And that starts with you, the professional, making it part of your own television fabric- and you'll be quite surprised at how well it all fits.

So before uttering 'what are they teaching TV students these days' or 'how come we can't find a good news editor', consider how you fit into the instructional equation.

Since you certainly can 'do', ensure the next generation of TV professional's collective successes, and your own, by contribute to their education and, well, educate.

Those who can do, ought to teach.