

Applying Best Training Strategies to Improve Employee Performance

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Abstract: There are numerous methods and materials with the most effective training techniques available to help organisations prepare and equip employees to better do their jobs. Indeed, with so many choices out there, it can be daunting to determine which methods to use and when to use them. And using several methods for each training session may actually be the most effective way to help employees learn and retain information. This paper, takes a close look at each of the myriad techniques, and examines their advantages and disadvantages. We also explain how human resources manager can combine the various methods into an effective blended learning approach.

Keywords: Applying, strategies, training, employee, improve performance

INTRODUCTION

A training strategy is a vision, focus, direction and action planning document for training and development in an organisation that requires implementation to achieve success Subba [1]. It is a blue print that needs to support the optimisation of the human resource capital in the organisation. It is essential that the training strategy is aligned to the organisation's strategy and enables its vision to be realised.

Strategies are the sets of intended and integrated plans that are to be pursued in order to achieve the strategic goals of the organisation. Learning and development - a useful way to work on developing strategies is to assess existing approaches and consider alternatives. Are there other vehicles that could offer a better means of learning and developing? Effective techniques for opening up minds to different possibilities are brainstorming ideas in a group or creating mind maps. The following table depicts a number of possible learning and development strategies which may be considered by the organisation.

Table-1: Developing strategies to assess existing approaches and considering alternatives. Adapted from: Thang, Quang and Buyen [5], Research and practice in Human Resources Management, 18(1), 28-45

Strategy	Components	Note
On the job learning	Observation / demonstration and practice Delegation Coaching Mentoring	Most effective and efficient means of developing capability
Self-managed learning	Reading ELearning Further education	Effective where it supports on the job learning Must be relevant
Deployment Mobility	Secondment Temporary Assignments / special projects	Effective where properly planned and managed facilitates on the job learning
Group learning	Cross functional teams Communities of practice Networking Action learning	Key to success is the management of the group and the attributes of the individual members. Can be resource intensive.
Tutor-led interventions	Training courses Seminars Developmental programmes	Must be relevant to current work situation. Opportunity to put learning into practice should be provided immediately on return to work.

Methods of Training

The selection of method for training need to be based on identified training needs, training objectives, an understanding on the part of the trainees, the resources available and an awareness of learning principles. DeCauza [2] explained that the most

popular training and development method used by organisations can be classified as either on the job or off the job. According to DeCauza *et al.* [2] there are a variety of training approaches that managers can use and these include:

On the job training

Mathias [3] defines on the job training as having a person learn the job by actually doing it. On the job training methods are by far the most commonly used in training for all levels of personnel. The object of on the job training is to bring the employees to at least a minimum acceptable standard of performance in the shortest possible time. The worker by these methods learns to master the operations involved on the actual job situation under the supervision of his immediate boss that has to carry the primary burden of conducting this training. Various methods of on the job training are as follows.

Learning by doing

This is very popular method of teaching new skills and methods to employees. Here the new employee observes a senior experienced worker and learns what to do. The advantage here is that this method is tried and tested and fit the requirements of the organisation. The disadvantages are that the senior worker is not usually trained in the skills and methods of training therefore it can be a process that may be time consuming as a new comer struggles to cope with the senior worker's explanations. Far more successful is to use a senior or experienced worker who has been trained in instruction or training method and whose teaching skills are coordinated with a developed program linked to off the job courses.

This is the most widely used training method, as in comparison; on the job method of training is simple and less costly to operate. Observing this method critically, the training places the employee in actual work situations and makes them appear to be immediately productive. Here, there is a close collaboration between trainer and learner. There are three common methods that are used in on the job training and these are; learning by doing, mentoring and shadowing and job rotation.

Mentoring

This is another version of the system whereby a senior or experienced employee takes charge of the training and development of a new employee. This suggests a much closer association than master / apprentice and elements of a father/son relationship can exist whereby the mentor acts as an advisor and protector to the trainee.

Job rotation

Job rotation is another version of training that became popular in the 1970s to help relieve boredom and thereby raise the productivity of shop floor workers. It is a management technique used to rotate incumbents from job to job or from department to department or from one plant to another in different geographical areas. The rotation is done on co-ordinate basis with a view to exposing the executives and trainees to new challenges and problems. It is also

aimed at giving executives broad outlook and diversified skills. The major objective of job rotation training is the broadening of the background of trainee in the organisation. If trainee is rotated periodically from one job to another job, he acquires a general background. The main advantages are: it provides a general background to the trainee, training takes place in actual situation, competition can be stimulated among the rotating trainees, and it stimulates a more co-operative attitude by exposing a man to other fellow's problems and viewpoints. There are certain disadvantages of this method. The productive work can suffer because of the obvious disruption caused by such changes. Rotations become less useful as specialisation proceeds, for few people have the breadth of technical knowledge and skills to move from one functional area to another.

Vestibule Training

Vestibule schools are widely in training for clerical and office jobs as well as for factory production jobs. Such training is usually shorter and less complex than that adaptable to the apprenticeship system. This method of training is where the worker is trained to use machine or perform a task similar to the ones in the real work situation. Under this method of training, the training program is conducted out of the job in an area separate from the work place under the supervision of a skilled instructor. After going through the vestibule training for a specified time period, the trainees are expected to apply their newly acquired skills when they are assigned to their real job.

Behaviour Modelling

Bryn [4] puts it this way, that behaviour modelling is where target behaviours are selected and videos on each of the behaviours produced, showing competent persons achieving success by following specific guidelines. Key points are displayed on screen and are backed by trainer-led discussions. Learning here is trainer enforced through role play.

Here, some of the methods used in the assessment centres include business games, in-basket, simulation, problem-centred cases, and many others, to enable the trainee learn the behaviours appropriate for the job through role playing. The use of behaviour modelling is based on social theory, and it is in particular an effective method for interpersonal or social skills training. This method of training incorporates the use of videos to clearly demonstrate the way things ought to be done, what behaviours are to be avoided. Behaviour modelling is often based on the demonstration of the right and effective way to behave and as a result, trainees are provided with facilities to practice this.

Understudy Training

Decauza [2] states that an understudy is a person who is training to assume a position at a future

date, the duties and responsibilities of the position currently occupied by the person him or her in understudying. An individual or group is assigned to assist a superior officer in the performance of his duties related to the position and at times left to grapple with the day to day problems which confront the superior in the performance of duty. They are allowed to solve them with or without the help of the superior. When the understudy shows promise of talent, he takes over when the superior is transferred, retired or is promoted to a higher position.

Case Study

Here, trainees are given case studies of real or imagined events in an organisation to study, analyse and give an opinion. After analysing several cases under the guidance of instructors, the trainees are exposed to certain concepts, problems, techniques and experiences, which they will later face on the job. The object of this method is to help the trainees think logically and develop the ability to analyse alternative courses of action systematically and objectively.

Business Exercise

In this type of training exercise, the work situation stimulated and the trainees are presented with reports, correspondence and memoranda, as in a real work situation, to handle. Business exercise training helps employees to develop decision-making, time management, planning and communication skills. It also helps them to develop a “feel” for the work situation before they apart the real job.

Group Training

Group training methods includes group discussion, seminar and sensitivity training. Here, trainees having different or similar backgrounds and experiences meet to share ideas on specific topics decided by the trainer. If organised properly, it offers trainees from different backgrounds an opportunity to share valuable information and learn from each other’s experience. An example is the T-group which is an approach to human relations; the original emphasis is that it is a form of group therapy. The seminars have the benefit of encouraging participants while providing opportunities from trainees to learn from each other. The T-group is however, leaderless, unstructured groups designed to encourage learning room experience and group dynamics, and also provide a forum for the giving and receiving of personal feedback.

However, the researcher believes that on the job method of training has a setback. A critical review of the method reveals that, although employees learn doing the job, their productivity tends to be low because they do not have the skills and knowledge needed to be effective and efficient. In an on the job training method, the emphasis is more on the acquisition of specific, local knowledge in a real situation. Unlike on the job method, off the job method emphasises

developing an understanding of general principles providing background knowledge and generating an awareness of comparative ideas and practices.

CONCLUSION

Training can be beneficial to employees at nearly every level of the company, but there may be unexpected challenges to implementing a program. Some employees may be reluctant to participate because they fail to see the purpose of additional training or don't want to sacrifice their time. In these cases, it is important to thoroughly communicate the company's staff development goals to every member of the organization.

The manager should provide information for the employee about why the new skills, skill enhancement or information is necessary. The manager should also make certain that the employee understands the link between the training and his job. The organization can enhance the impact of the training even further if the employee sees the link between the training and his ability to contribute to the accomplishment of the organization's business plan and goals.

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