

Training and Career Development for Greater Productivity and Individual Advancement

The overall goal of training is to increase the productivity of the organization's employees. Part of that training effort is to develop the talent that an organization has. Once that talent is developed, it is important that there be programs that help employees develop their careers in the organization.

If the employees in an organization do not know how to do something, they cannot do it efficiently or effectively. Employees can usually be trained to make even the simplest tasks in an organization become more efficient and effective. Training should take into account not only the specific tasks people are being trained for, but also how that task fits into the overall organization. Training must also take into account the future needs of both the organization and the individuals being trained.

People should be trained in a variety of skills. Those skills include technical, human, and personal skills.

- **Technical skills** are the specific tasks a person must be able to do to perform a job. These might include how to use particular equipment, how to use software, how a particular process must be done, and so forth.
- **Human skills** involve the ability to work effectively with other people. Human skills might include management training, EEO training, teambuilding skills, and so on.
- **Personal skills** include how one handles oneself when dealing with the organization. At a lower level, this may include helping people to know what behavior is expected as far as coming to work on time, personal hygiene, safety training, and so on. At higher levels, personal skills may include stress management, negotiating skills, personal financial management, and so forth.

Needs Assessment

Planning for training follows from the strategic plan for the overall organization, the human resource plan, and job analyses for positions in the organization. Doing a **needs assessment** is part of this training plan.

The needs assessment takes the information from the strategic plan, from projected human resource needs, and from the job analyses for the various positions in the organization and organizes that information to come up with questions about future staffing needs for the organization. The needs assessment also researches what needs are not being met in the organization for skills for which employees must be trained. This research often consists of asking employees and managers about what their training needs are, to come up with an objective assessment of these needs.

The Training Program

Once a needs assessment has been done, the training program can begin to take shape. The development of the training program involves determining who, what, where, and how the training will take place.

Who to train is a tricky question. Some organizations see training as a reward for their best-performing workers. Other organizations see training as being most important for the workers who are not performing up to their promise. An organization cannot expect employees to be as productive if the employees do not have adequate training. Sometimes a poorly producing worker can be turned into a star performer with a little training. However, there is a career-development advantage to providing training to the star performers.

What training will take place involves deciding what people must be trained to do. Most of these decisions will be apparent from the needs assessment done earlier, but decisions often must be made about the priorities for different training needs because of limited budgets or limited time.

Where the training will take place centers on whether the training will be internal or external. The training is more effective internally if the organization already has the resources and knowledge to do the training and if there are a number of people to be trained. The training may be more effective externally if the training would require a major expansion of internal training resources or knowledge and if there are only a few employees that need the training. Many organizations compromise between internal and external training by bringing in a consultant to do the initial training and then use the people who were trained ("train the trainer") to conduct any additional training internally. If the organization is highly specialized, there may be no external resources to provide the training, so any training may have to be internal.

How the training will be accomplished will depend on what type of training is being done. If the needed training is more technical in nature, it is usually good to include a "hands-on" component. This can be accomplished through **on-the-job (OJT) training** or through **apprenticeships**. It is useful to have some **classroom training** with OJT because an individual will learn faster if they understand the larger principles behind the training they receive. Classroom training also tends to standardize the training that different individuals receive on the job. Classroom training provides a process in which they can compare the OJT they are receiving with the OJT that other individuals may be receiving.

If the training is more human in nature, it is often provided through **tuition reimbursement** programs and the use of **training consultants**. Human training tends to be more classroom-oriented, but it can involve experiential components such as mentoring programs, job rotation, behavior modeling, and internships.

If the training is of a more personal type, **outside agencies** may conduct the training at the lower levels and training consultants may provide the training at the upper levels. Even though some organizations may see personal training as the "problem" of the individual, personal training has great potential to help retain employees and thus save the organization money in the long run.

Computers are being used successfully to provide many types of training through **programmed training, simulations, and distance learning**. Computers can also provide a good component to OJT because they can provide a way for an OJT trainee to get answers to their questions when their trainer may not be present.

Evaluation of Training

It is essential that an organization evaluate the training the employees receive. The ultimate test is whether the trainees' productivity increases. There are so many factors in whether productivity increases that it is important to document what part of a productivity increase is the result of the training. If only some of the workers receive the training, and the productivity of the trained individuals goes up while the productivity of the untrained individuals stays the same, the training was probably effective.

Many organizations test individuals before they receive training (pretest) and then test the individuals after the training (posttest) to see if the individuals have gained skills and knowledge from the training. Some organizations rely on the evaluation of the individuals taking the training to help them judge the effectiveness of the training. In the end, there should be evidence that the training has gained the organization more benefits than it cost to do the training.

One important question is, does the training last over time? Some training experiences get employees excited and involved but do not have any follow-up components, so over time the individuals go back to doing things the same way they did before taking the training. To be effective, the organization must reinforce the training, and the training must be updated to fit with the organization's new needs.

Training has the potential to increase an organization's productivity. To be effective, training involves a needs assessment, an ongoing training program that fits the tasks being trained for, and ongoing evaluation of the training program's effectiveness.

Career Development

Career development is important to the organization because it provides future skilled workers, managers, and leaders for the organization. The work environment in all modern organizations is changing constantly. Career development enables the individuals that work in the organization to adapt to those changes and grow with the organization.

Career development involves technical, human, and personal skills. Individuals must develop their careers, so they can accomplish career goals in their lives. Organizations should help individuals develop their careers, so the organization will have a well-trained and stable workforce.

Individuals and organizations should practice career development by:

- assessing interests and abilities
- setting goals
- being aware of opportunities
- gaining appropriate training, degrees, and certificates
- building a professional reputation
- learning to deal effectively with organizational politics
- building skills for working in teams
- developing networks and networking skills
- being adaptable
- evaluating and reassessing interests, abilities, and goals

One of the most important aspects of career development is balancing work life and family life. Each individual and their family should be well informed as to the time commitments and costs associated with actions aimed at developing a career. Training and earning degrees and certificates take time away from family life and so must be supported by the individual employee's family. Some career-development actions may involve significant costs, so the individuals' families should be aware of any sacrifices that they may have to make. Organizations can help with many of these work-life and family-life conflicts by providing benefits such as day care, maternity and paternity leave, tuition-reimbursement programs, flexible work arrangements, and telecommuting opportunities.

An important part of a career-development program is providing opportunities for dual-career couples. Nepotism policies (policies on hiring members of the same family) may have to be

revised so that an organization could hire both members of dual-career couples. Relocation assistance may have to be provided for spouses in the instance where a move must be made for one of the family members to move up the career ladder in the organization. Travel policies that allow both members of a couple to travel when it is not too harmful to family life may have to be developed.

The **Family and Medical Leave Act** (FMLA) provides unpaid leave time for a full-time employee that must take care of a family member, for maternity and paternity leave, for adoption or foster-care needs, and for illness of the employee. The employee must be reinstated in the organization at the end of the leave in the same or a similar position as they held before taking leave. More information on the FMLA can be found at <http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd/fmla/>.

Other career-development strategies can involve mentoring, internships, and/or coaching. **Mentoring** involves placing a junior employee with a more senior employee so that the senior employee can help the junior employee in developing his or her career. **Internships** are used mostly with college students working part-time in the organization. By having internships, an organization gets a chance to observe the work and the potential of a possible employee before committing to hiring that employee for the long term. **Coaching** involves having someone provide objective advice and encouragement to an employee as they advance in their career. Coaches are often outside the organization, so they can provide advice without it being seen as having political implications in the organization.

Career development is an extension of training. For an organization to prosper, it needs both training and career-development programs. These programs are an important part of meeting an organization's needs as outlined in its strategic plan, human resource plan, and job analyses