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Simplify Business.

Company Training Guide

Analyze & Design
Custom Training Program

Part 1: Determine Training Needs

You can use many different company resources to help you determine your company's training needs.

- **Company goals.** Refer to your company's stated goals to help you define overall training program goals. Align your training objectives with company goals in such a way that when the workforce meets your objectives, they will also be meeting the company's goals. This process starts with new employee orientation training.
- **Job descriptions.** Include stated job requirements as your base for needed training.
- **OSHA 300 log.** Review this document to identify specific safety needs in your company. Use these injury statistics to identify areas where more safety training is needed.
- **HR complaints.** Review employee complaints to prioritize training on discrimination, harassment, overtime versus compensation time, and other employee issues.
- **Legal obligations.** You must ensure that your training program encompasses all required training to meet government and legal obligations, such as Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirements, Department of Labor requirements, state-specific requirements, and others.

Part 2 - Determine Who Needs to be Trained

Once you've compiled the subjects on which you need to train, you need to figure out which employees need which training. Use other company resources to help you determine who needs training.

- **Company policy**. For certain areas or subjects, your organization's policies may spell out who is to be trained, in what, and on what frequency. Use these instructions to start your list of affected employees.
- **Employee records.** Review for safety violations or accidents to determine if employees may need more safety training; for harassment or discrimination complaints, which may indicate the need for more sensitivity training; or for performance reviews that indicate employees may need—or may have requested—more skills training.
- **Informal discussions.** Talk with employees, supervisors, and managers to get candid information about areas where people feel well-equipped to do their jobs and areas where they are uncomfortable.
- **Focus groups.** This method involves selecting a group of hand-picked employees and asking them designed questions regarding training. This activity gives you the opportunity to gather data from a few people in a short period of time. Focus groups are good for brainstorming, which can be a valuable source of information. Make sure the selected members are outspoken. A quiet participant may be hesitant to contribute.

- **Interviews.** Personal interviews can be very effective for discovering what training employees want, but it can also be very time-consuming. This method is best for specialized training that affects a small percentage of the workforce.
- **Questionnaires.** Compose a few questions specific to training you are planning. This method is effective for elective training or for new training areas in which you want to begin programs. Keep answers confidential so employees feel comfortable submitting their input.
- **Skill tests or demonstrations.** Give written tests or have employees perform demonstrations on certain equipment to determine who needs additional training.

Part 3 - How to Train Adult Learners

Most adults are self-directed learners: They want to learn what they want, when they want, and how they want. Adult learners have their own style of learning that includes four key elements, discussed below. Even if you structure your training program to meet these elements, however, you may still run into reluctant learners. We also provide seven rules for training reluctant or resistant learners.

The Four Elements of Adult Learning

1. **Motivation.** To motivate adult learners, set a friendly or open tone to each session, create a feeling of concern, and set an appropriate level of difficulty. Other motivators for adult learners include:
    - Personal achievement—including attaining higher job status or keeping up with or surpassing competitors
    - Social well-being—including opportunities for community work
    - External expectations—such as meeting the expectations of someone with formal Authority
    - Social relationships—including opportunities to make new friends that satisfy people's desire for association
    - Stimulation—that breaks the routine of work and provides contrast in employees' lives
    - Interest in learning—which gives employees knowledge for the sake of knowledge and satisfies curious minds
2. **Reinforcement.** Use both positive and negative reinforcement to be successful in training adult learners. Use positive reinforcement frequently, such as verbal praise, when teaching new skills in order to encourage progress and reward good results. Use negative reinforcement, such as negative comments on a performance review, to stop bad habits or performance.
3. **Retention.** Adults must retain what they've learned in order to realize benefits on both the personal and company-wide levels. Achieve great retention rates by having trainees practice their newly acquired skills again and again until they are familiar and comfortable enough to ensure long-term success.

4. **Transference.** Adults want to bring what they learn in training directly to the workplace. Positive transference occurs when adults are able to apply learned skills to the workplace. Negative transference occurs when learners can't—or don't—apply skills to the workplace.

Seven 'Laws' for Training Adult Learners

Adults typically bring a broad sense of experience to training sessions, to which they can attach new ideas and skills. At the same time, however, these learners are sometimes reluctant to accept new ideas and methods of working. Trainers may sometimes need to overcome this resistance before learning can take place.

Sivasailam Thiagarajan, president of Workshops by Thiagi and author of many training games and simulations, recommends following these seven "laws" when you train reluctant learners:

1. **Law of previous experience:** Tie all new learning to and further build upon the prior experiences of learners.
2. **Law of relevance:** Effective learning must be relevant to learners' lives and work.
3. **Law of self-direction:** Many adults prefer to learn on their own at their own pace.
4. **Law of expectation:** Adult reactions to training sessions are often shaped by the expectations they have tied to content area, training format, fellow participants, and trainers.
5. **Law of self-image:** Adults have set notions of the best way they learn. These notions may either interfere with or enhance the learning experience.
6. **Law of multiple criteria:** Adult learners base the quality of the learning on accomplishments and learning experiences.
7. **Law of alignment:** In successful learning, objectives, content, activities, and assessment techniques must all be aligned.

Once you are familiar with the overall needs of adult learners, you need to further customize your training plan by getting to know the specific makeup of the employees in your company.

Part 4 - Know Your Audience

In order to make every training session as effective as possible, you need to analyze the participants in each group. Gather the following information about group members:

- **What is their background?**
  - How much training have they had on this topic?
  - Why does management think they need more training?
  - Do any trainees have any relationship with the trainer (acquaintances, jobs are related)?
  - Do any trainees have high levels of responsibility or authority in the organization?
- **What are the demographics of the group?**
  - How many trainees are in the group?
  - What is the average age?
  - What is the ratio of men to women?
  - What is their educational level?
  - What is their level of expertise?
  - How much prior knowledge do they have about the session topic?
  - Do some know more than others?
- **What is the overall attitude of the group?**
  - Is this voluntary or required training?
  - Do they want to be here?
  - What do they think of the subject matter?
  - What do they think about the trainer?
  - Are they a friendly group?
- **What are their expectations?**
  - Can the trainer meet their needs?
  - Will the training benefit the participants?
  - Will the training benefit the trainer? The organization?
  - Could there be disadvantages as a result of the training session?

You also need to know what kind of learners' trainees are. In general, people learn in one of three ways:

- **Visual** - These learners receive information best through seeing or reading it. Their brains process the information and retain it once they see it. These learners benefit from written instructions, diagrams, handouts, overheads, videos, and other visual information.
- **Oral** - Oral learners receive information best when they hear it. They respond best to speakers, audioconferences, discussion groups, Q & A sessions, and other oral information.
- **Kinesthetic or tactile** - These learners learn by touch and feel. They will benefit from show and tell where equipment is available to handle. They also respond well to demonstrations of new procedures and in having the chance to practice themselves. You will inevitably have all three kinds of learners in every training session. It's important, therefore, that you program a combination of teaching styles into your training. We will discuss blended learning in detail in Chapter3.

When Training Isn't the Answer

Once you've gathered all the pertinent information identified above, it's time to analyze and confirm the data to determine what training needs exist. Remain open to the idea that training may not always be the answer in every case. Use these guidelines to determine if another approach might work best:

- In cases where the overall size or difficulty of the skill or procedure is complex or where only one employee is having trouble, coaching or other one-on-one job aids may be better than a training session.
- Qualified training is not enough. You must also make sure to motivate participants to learn and perform. If you've already conducted training, you may not need more sessions; you may instead need to recommend ways to change the working environment in order to encourage better job performance.
- If previous training hasn't met its goals, find out why it failed. Was there too much down time between the session and performance? Was the session held under ideal conditions or was there a poor training environment? All these factors must be taken into consideration before any decisions are made. The solution may be as simple as revising an old program.

Part 5 – Developing a Detailed Training Blueprint

You've done your homework and know what your training needs are, who needs to be trained, and how best to train them. Now you need to develop a plan. Here's how:

1. **Set specific goals to meet each training need you've identified.**
   - Use quantifiable measurements for the accomplishments you want employees to achieve after training, such as an increased production quota or decreased injury rates.
   - Use charts, graphs, and tables wherever possible to show management specific numbers and trends that your training program will achieve. For example, chart the increased productivity curve you plan to reach with your training or graph the injury rate you hope to achieve.
   - Set realistic targets that are achievable, but not necessarily easily. Know your trainees well enough to know how to challenge them to reach for more effective performance. For example, look at the highest production peak employees have ever achieved, even if it was only one time, and set your target slightly above this point. Employees know they can achieve it because they already have. But they also know it's challenging to accomplish.

2. **List everyone who needs to be trained in each topic area.**
   - Use these lists to help you customize your training to your audience.
   - Prepare trainees by communicating before sessions with prequizzes, agendas, or requests for specific areas trainees want addressed in the training.
3. **Set up a training schedule.**
   - Make a master schedule of all the training you want to conduct for this month or this year.
   - Within the master schedule, set specific dates for each session.
   - Include makeup dates for trainees who cannot attend scheduled sessions.
   - Use a logical progression for multi-part training; make sure sessions aren't too far apart that trainees forget the first training or too close together that trainees suffer information overload. Also allow time for trainees who want more training in the first session to receive it before the next session is held.
4. **Choose the appropriate method(s) for each group of trainees in each topic area.**
   - Plan to use more than one training method for each topic to ensure that you reach all the types of learners in the session.
   - Plan flexibility into your use of materials so that you are prepared for technical difficulties or other problems.
   - List the materials and methods you plan to use in each session.

Once you have all of this information collected and organized, you are in great shape to begin developing the specifics of your training sessions. The next chapter covers a comprehensive range of training styles and materials and helps you decide which methods are best to use when—and how to combine methods to present an effective blended learning approach.

eESI's Training portal offers more than 500 courses to help you meet your training needs.

For more inquiries or tour of the training portal, contact training@eESIpeo.com.