WHAT MANAGEMENT AND TRAINERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT TRAINING

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INTRODUCTION

This paper takes a different view of training. It comes from the management side of the equation, and it focuses on what managers and trainers need to know about training. The training function is not the keeper of the corporate "school house" but is the "performance improver." This means changing the mission of the training function from "number of employees trained" to "organization performance improved." We are not in the training business, we are in the performance improvement business!

A VIEW OF TRAINING

Managers have to move away from thinking they have a problem and the training department will fix it. They must stop believing that they do not need to know anything about training except the phone number of the training department. All they have to do is tell the trainer what they want, and it is their job to do it (Gayeski, 1997). Managers who believe this are easy pickings and can be sold a bill of goods. However, this thinking can easily be revised. With just a few insights about the rules of the training game, and the turf on which it is played, managers can tap into their training resources for services that will be of great benefit to them. Some of the benefits are:

1. Enable them to determine why the performance of their people is not meeting their expectations and know what to do about it.
2. Ensure workers possess the job-relevant skills they need.
3. Get training done in the least amount of time and at the least cost whether the training is obtained internally or from vendors.
4. Avoid having people away from their jobs any longer than necessary.
5. Save 100 percent of proposed training development and implementation costs when analysis shows that a non-training solution will work better.
6. Protect their budget against those who would sell them more training hardware than they need.

Today's competitive environment demands that organizations perform at the highest possible levels in order to survive. The only sustainable advantage that any organization is going to have is the ability of its people (Orlin, 1988). We desperately need a skilled, productive, competitive workforce. As the marketplace becomes increasingly complex, competitive and global, a skilled workforce is fast becoming the only sustainable advantage organizations can maintain (Leibler and Parkman, 1995). We will not get one with pat answers like, "train them" or "tell them to be lifelong learners." The traditional approach to training is changing. The focus today is on things that will enable workers to contribute directly to better productivity, improved sales, more profits -- the things that matter to business (Hequet, 1995). We must practice the science of human performance technology and establish performance improvement systems in our organizations.

Human performance technology boils down to a systematic approach to problem solving. It rests on several assumptions. It assumes that three factors affect performance: the worker, the job, and the environment. It assumes the cause of a performance problem has been identified. It assumes that if an analysis identifies a training need (i.e., the problem stems from a gap in worker's skills or knowledge), the solution is systematically designed to fulfill specific learning objectives in the most cost-effective manner. It assumes the impact of that intervention will be evaluated to determine how effectively it solved the problem it was designed to solve.

Human performance technology is "the process of selection, analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation of programs to most cost-effectively influence human behavior and accomplishment" (Leibler and Parkman, 1996). The idea is to make the human factor in the productivity formula as predictable, and as amenable to improvement, as the machine and material factors in the performance equation. Human performance technology is a set of methods and processes for solving problems, or realizing opportunities, related to the performance of people. The model (see Figure 1 next page) provides a picture of the process (Addison and Haig, 1994).

Essentially, there are five major steps:

1. Conduct the performance analysis. Identify the actual and desired performance, determine the deficiency or gap between the two, and set performance standards.
2. Conduct a cause analysis to determine the root cause.
3. Design interventions or solutions. Consider changing the work, the worker, or the work place. Compare the cost of every solution with the cost of inadequate performance to decide whether or not it is worth implementing.
4. Implement the solutions. Run the training program, redesign the job, change the hiring system, or whatever it takes.
5. Monitor and evaluate the results and revise the solutions accordingly.

This process must be integrated into management training programs, accounted for in performance appraisals, supported by tools and resources, and rewarded in compensation plans. In other words, managing performance must be an integral part of each manager's job. It must be seen as an important business investment.

If a manager is to make cost-effective use of these training and non-training tools, he or she needs to know the following (Mager, 1992):
1. What it takes to make the performance you want happen.
2. How to make sure you will get the training and other services you need.
3. How to decide when to train and when to do something else.
4. How to deal with trainers.
5. How to get full value -- how to make sure your people do not lose the skills they have learned.
6. How to do it yourself.

Managers will have to be teachers in the changing world of work (Tobin, 1993). Line managers must become more directly involved in the training process (Rae, 1991). Everything is changing. The old-line thinking saw work as sort of a job-in-a-box. Those days are dead and gone (Pritchett, 1996). Learning must be a part of everyone's job, not just the training department's. Managers must empower workers to take more responsibility for their learning and performance (Gayeski, 1996). Thus, line managers are taking a more active role in the training function in order to improve performance (Phillips, 1996). They must exert leadership in order to build a committed and capable team that will improve performance (Gelinas and James, 1996).

THE NAME OF THE GAME ISN'T TRAINING

Training is only a means to an end. So, what is the end toward which it strives? It is performance. In order to contribute toward the success of an organization, you need people to perform their jobs. If people do not do what they are supposed to do, regardless of how much they know, the organization will flounder. Therefore, the name of the game is to smooth the way toward an ability to perform because it is through human performance that results are achieved (Densford, 1996).
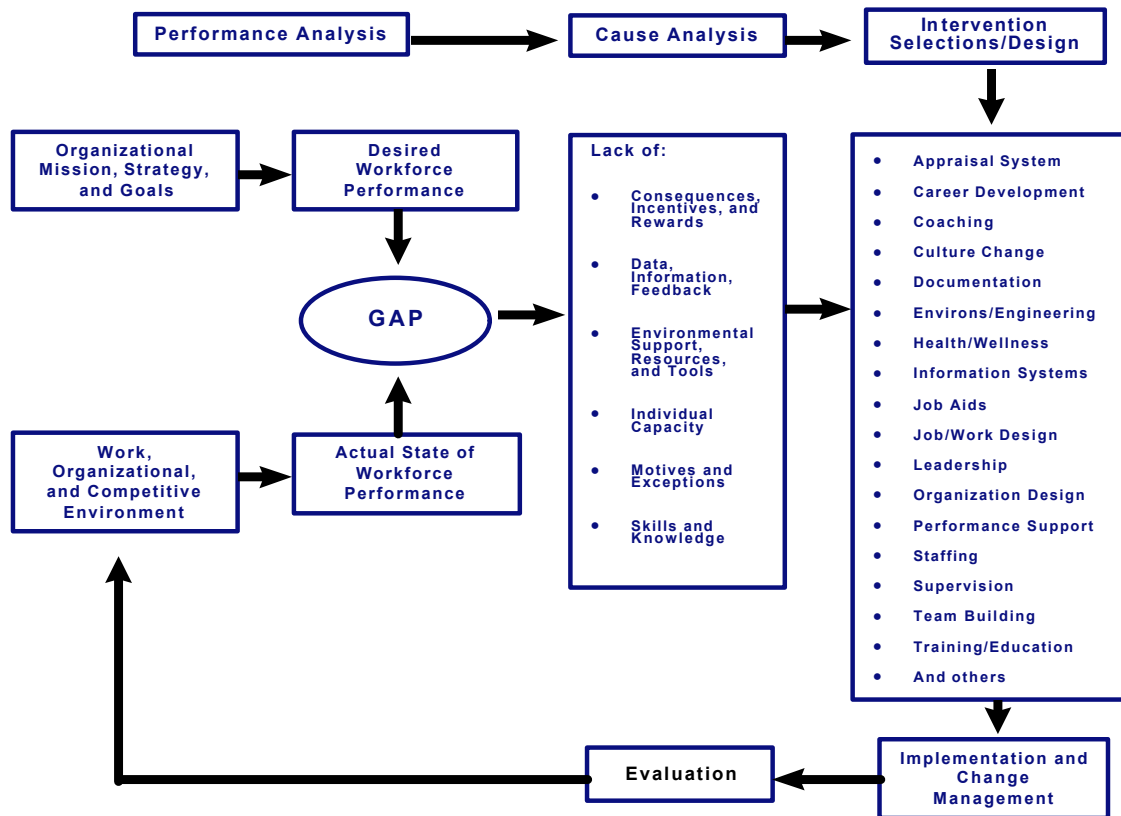
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Performance Analysis  ──►  Cause Analysis  ──►  Intervention
                                                 Selections/Design
                                                        │
                                                        ▼
Organizational        Desired              Lack of:              • Appraisal System
Mission, Strategy, ─► Workforce                                  • Career Development
and Goals             Performance          • Consequences,       • Coaching
                          │                  Incentives, and     • Culture Change
                          ▼                  Rewards             • Documentation
                                                                 • Environs/Engineering
                        GAP    ──►          • Data,              • Health/Wellness
                          ▲                   Information,       • Information Systems
                          │                   Feedback           • Job Aids
Work,                 Actual State of       • Environmental      • Job/Work Design
Organizational, ────► Workforce               Support,           • Leadership
and Competitive       Performance             Resources,         • Organization Design
Environment                                   and Tools          • Performance Support
                                            • Individual         • Staffing
                                              Capacity           • Supervision
                                            • Motives and        • Team Building
                                              Exceptions         • Training/Education
                                            • Skills and         • And others
                                              Knowledge                 │
                                                                        ▼
                    ◄──── Evaluation ◄──── Implementation and
                                            Change
                                            Management
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Figure 1. Human Performance Technology Model. This is a five-step systems model: performance analysis, cause analysys, intervention, implementation, and evaluation.

Successful job performance requires the following four conditions (all of them):

1. Skill
2. Self-Confidence
3. Opportunity to Perform
4. Supportive Environment

Skill alone is not enough to guarantee performance. However, if people do not know how to do something, they cannot do it. Skills are provided by training. They are developed and strengthened through practice, through the actual performance of those work tasks.

Self-confidence is also provided through training. When people do not believe they can do something, they may not even try to do it. Their self-esteem will suffer (Reinhart, 1997). Self-confidence is important because it influences performance in several ways. People need strong self-confidence if they are expected to continue their efforts to apply what they have learned and to learn new things. It helps people survive in the face of rejection. Training must be orchestrated so that trainees learn to accredit their successes to their own performance, rather than to the influence of others or to chance.

Opportunity to perform is controlled by managers. Without the opportunity to perform, there will be no performance. Opportunity means being provided with:

1. The permission (or authority) to perform.
2. Information about expectations.
3. Tools and equipment needed to perform.
4. A place in which to perform.
5. The time to perform.

The bottom line is you cannot store training. You use it or you lose it. This means that you should provide training as close as possible to the opportunity to use the new skills.

A supportive environment is controlled also by management. A supportive environment is one that encourages desired performance and discourages undesired performance. It is an environment in which workers are given reasons (incentives) to perform in the desired manner, a clear description of the results to be obtained and the standards to be met. It is an environment in which the worker's world gets a little brighter when they do it right, and a little dimmer when they do not.

THE MAIN TOOLS

There are many tools that may be available to solve problems. This paper is focusing on maximizing human performance, and the following tools have been successful:

1. Information
2. Documentation
3. Feedback
4. Job Aids
5. Workplace Design
6. Organizational Structure
7. Permission (authority) to Perform
8. Consequence Management (rewards and punishments)
9. Training

We will now explore each of these to see how they aid performance. If you know what they are and how to use them, they will be very helpful in improving performance.

Information. One of the common reasons why people do not do what is expected of them is that they do not know what is expected of them. Clear information about expected performance is a powerful tool for driving performance.

Documentation. This includes the manuals, the wiring diagrams, the schematics, and the reference materials that make it possible for people to do their jobs. Job-related documentation will provide a rich opportunity for performance improvement.

Feedback. Feedback is a powerful tool because it can lead to instant performance improvement and can help maintain high performance levels. To be useful, feedback needs to be provided as soon after the performance as possible.

Job Aids. These are items that cue people to do their jobs right. They are used to remind people how to do things they already know how to do.

Workplace Design. A well-designed workplace is another avenue through which performance can be facilitated. If the workplace itself has

been thoughtlessly put together, it can become an awesome obstacle to performance.

Organizational Structure. Sometimes the organization is structured in such a way as to make it difficult for everyone to pull in the same direction. Jobs need to be designed and interfaces established between jobs that will smooth the flow of the processes through which outcomes are to be achieved.

Permission to Perform. It is not uncommon for people to be expected to do things they haven't been given permission to do. If people have been given the responsibility for getting results but not the permission to do the things needed to get those results, performing will be difficult, if not impossible.

Consequences (Rewards and Punishments). One of the most powerful tools for facilitating performance is at the same time the most available and the least well used. That tool is called consequences. When performance is followed by events that the performers consider favorable, they are more likely to repeat the performance in the future.

Training. Trainers today are skilled in their craft and can actually guarantee that training works.

The above performance influencing tools are available to meet the needs of the workforce. Training is only one of the tools that is available. The right tool, or combination of tools, needs to be selected in order to improve performance.

HOW TO PENETRATE THE FOG

Fog obscures our vision, and it certainly can inhibit conversation if we pick the wrong words in trying to communicate our thoughts. A thick fog bank of words makes it difficult to communicate. Unfortunately, thousands of words can be used in discussing human performance. Most words and phases are obstructions - fuzzies - that are open to many interpretations. They mean different things to different people. Some examples are:

- Is a caring manager
- Is a patient listener
- Has effective communication skills
- Argues effectively

There's really nothing wrong with these expressions when they are used in everyday conversation. They become a problem only when it is important to do something about them. You need to be able to dissect the abstractions into specific performances that say what they mean.

SOLVING PERFORMANCE PROBLEMS

Problems occur when things don't happen to your satisfaction. The "problem" is some indication that there is a gap between what is actually happening and what you expect to happen; a solution is a way to eliminate that gap. Problems might be expressed as follows:

- My salespeople don't have the right attitude about customers.
- This weld is too raggedy.

Solutions, on the other hand, are actions that may be taken to correct the problems. Solutions might be expressed as follows:

- My salespeople will complete the course on customer courtesy.
- These welders will be given further training in welding.

With this distinction in mind, you can see the trap in a comment such as, "I've got a training problem," There's no such thing. Training is a solution, not a problem. Training is what you do to get rid of a problem, such as a lack of skill or knowledge. But there are many reasons why people don't perform at their best, reasons not remedied by training.

- They've forgotten how to do it.
- They don't know what's expected of them.
- They don't have the authority to do it.
- They don't get timely information (feedback) about how well they're doing.
- Their information sources (documentation) are poorly designed, inaccessible, or nonexistent.
- Their work station is clumsily designed.
- They're punished or ignored for doing it right.
- They're rewarded for doing it wrong.
- Nobody ever notices whether they do it right or not.
- Their organization makes desired performance difficult or impossible.

Unfortunately, when some managers notice someone performing inadequately, there is a tendency to conclude that they have "got a training problem." But this approach opens the door to all sorts of mischief. If you say that to a trainer who does not know the craft, he or she probably will begin building a course, without really addressing the problem first. You might then find yourself with a fine, entertaining course that trainees rave about but that does not do any good. Or, you might find yourself with a course that uses lots of shiny, expensive hardware but does not solve the problem.

If someone says "I've got a training problem" to trainers who do know their craft, those trainers will say to themselves, "Hmm. Here is someone who does not know the difference between problems and solutions. The first thing I need to do is to find out what event is causing this person to conclude that training is needed." The trainer will then begin tactfully to ask questions intended to discover what the problem is, so that he or she can determine whether training should be part or all of the solution. In other words, the trainer will begin to carry out a performance analysis. Unless someone diagnoses the problems before settling on solutions, the problems either will no't get solved or will be attacked with solutions that know how to do diagnoses because most managers do not.

Managers who do not know how to match solutions to performance problems will not demand training that is not necessary. The ability to carry out a performance analysis, therefore, will substantially increase your power to improve performance.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

A performance analysis is a procedure for matching solutions to problems in human performance. It begins by identifying the difference(s) between actual and desired performance, then identifies the cause(s) of the discrepancy, and finally suggests courses of action to address those causes. The analysis is carried out by answering a series of questions. Usually, the analysis of a performance discrepancy takes no longer than a few minutes. When it takes longer, it is only because the information needed to answer the questions is not immediately available.

Performance Analysis Checklist

1. Whose performance is at issue?

2. What is the performance discrepancy?
   - What is actually happening?
   - What should be happening?

3. What is the approximate cost of the discrepancy? (What would happen if you ignored the problem?)

4. Is the discrepancy a skill deficiency? (Are they unable to do it?)

5. If yes, it is a skill deficiency?
   a. Can the job or task be simplified?
   b. Are the tasks performed often?
   c. Will other factors impede performance?

6. If no, it is not a skill deficiency:
   a. Are the performers being punished for doing it right?
   b. Are the performers being rewarded for doing it wrong?
   c. Are there no consequences at all to the performer for performing, either right or wrong?
   d. Are there obstacles to performing as expected?

7. List the causes of the discrepancy.

8. Describe solutions.

9. Estimate the cost of each solution.

10. Select the cost-effective solutions that can be implemented (those that are practical to implement).

11. Implement the solutions.

When to Use It

Use the performance analysis whenever you feel there is a difference between what workers actually do and what they should be doing. Use it whenever you find yourself thinking:

- They are not doing what they should be doing.
- They are not getting the results they should be getting.
- They need training.

- Their reports are always late.
- They don't make enough sales calls.

The Procedure

1. Decide whose performance is at issue. This analysis is of no value in the abstract. Therefore, identify whose performance is at issue. It might be a person or a group of people in a single category. For example, an issue might be the performance of a truck driver, a production manager, or a lathe operator. Or it might be there is a problem with the performance of all of the drivers, the entire sales staff, or the assemblers in Department X. Be sure to identify the performers at issue before proceeding.

2. Describe the discrepancy. Describe the actual performance and the desired performance.

   State what someone is doing that he or she should not be doing; or state what the person is not doing that he or she should be doing. Then state the desired performance. The description must be in terms of performance, in terms of doing. Abstract (fuzzy) language does not communicate your desires. Your knowledge of goal analysis will make this step easier to complete. Here are some examples of good and bad descriptions.

   Bad: They are not motivated.
   Good: They are not getting their reports in on time.
   Bad: They do not have the right attitude toward customers.
   Good: They are not answering the telephone within two rings.

   The differences between what should be happening and what is actually happening might be described like this:

   Actual: Reports are up to three weeks late.
   Desired: Reports are submitted by deadline.

   Estimate the size (cost) of the discrepancy. How much is this problem costing you? What would happen if you ignored it? Is it slowing down production, taking up your time, irritating and possibly losing customers? Is it causing accidents? Does it result in materials waste? Consider all of the

consequences of the discrepancy and estimate an approximate cost. Until you estimate the cost of the problem you will be in no position to select a solution that costs less than the problem.

If you have difficulty estimating the cost, imagine that someone has challenged you by saying, "Look. That problem is so trivial it is not worth doing anything about." How would you respond? If you cannot point to one or more serious consequences (costs) caused by the performance discrepancy, maybe it is too small to bother with.

4. Decide whether the discrepancy is a skill deficiency. Do the workers already know how to do it the way you want it done? Could they perform the way you want them to perform if their lives depended on it? If they cannot do it, then training is likely to be part or all of the solution. If, on the other hand, they already can do what is expected of them but for some reason are not doing it, then there is no skill deficiency. In this case, training is unlikely to be required, and the next step will be to determine why workers are not doing what they already know how to do. If you are not sure whether people can now do what they should be doing, the simplest move is to ask them.

5. If yes, it is a skill deficiency. They cannot now perform the way you want them to. If they could not perform as desired if their lives depended on it --- then it may be that they need training. But hold on. There is more to consider before rushing off to the training store. There are a number of remedies that might get you where you want to go, so answer these questions before concluding that training is the answer.

   a. Can the job be simplified? It is possible to simplify or redesign a job or task and therefore reduce or eliminate the need for training. Sometimes this can be done by creating checklists or other job aids or it can be done by changing the scope of the job itself.

   b. Are the tasks performed often? If so and people still are not performing to your satisfaction, it is likely that they are not getting information (feedback) about the quality of their performance. When a

task is performed often and still is not being done to satisfaction, introducing feedback is a likely the solution.

If the skill is not performed often, remedies to think about are practice and job aids. Remember, you cannot store training. So when skills are used only once in a while, either arrange for periodic skills practice or have trainers create job aids that remind people of what to do when it comes time to do it. On occasion, both remedies may be in order.

Although remedies such as job simplification, job aids, feedback, and practice are often useful for avoiding training, there is no reason why you should have to become expert yourself at applying these interventions. That is what your trainers and other human factors people are for. You merely need to know that these remedies exist and that they will save you time and money when they can be used. They are almost always less expensive than the training solution.

c. Will other factors impede performance? You are dealing with a performance discrepancy—they simply do not know how to do it the way they are expected to. But what will happen when they do learn to do it right? Will skill be enough to guarantee performance? Or will other factors interfere? Make sure you collect all the clues that will lead you to the solutions to your problem. Pretend that the non-performers have just learned to do what they need to do, and that you are looking for additional reasons why performance may be impeded.

6. If no, it is not a skill deficiency. They can perform the way you want them to but are not doing so. You need to find out why they are not doing what they already know how to do. There are four main reasons why people do not do what they know how to do.

- They are being punished for doing it right.
- They are being rewarded for doing it in some undesired way.
- They are ignored for doing it, right or wrong.
- There are obstacles that prevent them from doing it.

There are hundreds of ways to create an upside-down consequence environment, one in which desired performance is punished and/or ignored, or in which undesired performance is rewarded. Some are blatant and some are subtle.

You probably can think of many more instances in which the desired performance was either punished or ignored, or in which other-than-desired performance was rewarded. Although topsy-turvy consequences can pose huge obstacles to performance, the problem is usually easy to correct.

It is important to note that we do not have any choice over whether we are going to influence performance through the application of consequences (rewards and punishments). We influence performance whether we like it or not. We do it when we smile, we do it when we frown, we do it when we comment favorably or unfavorably on someone's work. The fact is, each one of us is personally a powerful source of rewards and punishments. Although we can control whether those rewards and punishments work for us or against us, we cannot stop dispensing them. If we accidentally smile at an undesired performance, we just may get more of it, regardless of the words we may be saying at the time.

At this point you may be thinking, "I'm not going to reward workers for doing what they get paid to do anyway," or, "I don't have that kind of control over raises and promotions."

These are reasonable thoughts. But, we are not talking about raises and promotions. We are talking about consequences that take place soon after a desired event has occurred. That may mean a smile, a pat on the back, a bit of verbal praise, an entry in a personnel file, a mention in the department monthly report, a party to celebrate a quota achieved, or any number of similar consequences that seldom cost a nickel to apply. We are talking about the little things that say, "You are doing a good job," or, "You are doing a better job today than you did yesterday," or, "You are improving." These are the little things that make a work environment positive rather than punishing.

One of the first steps in this portion of the performance analysis, then, is to identify any topsy-turvy consequences. Ask the following questions:

a. Are the performers being punished for doing it right? First, list all the things that happen to the performers when performing as desired.

Caution: It is tempting here to list consequences for people other than the performer. But it does not matter that poor performance causes you to be upset, or that it causes others extra work: what matters is what happens to the performers in question.

Next, determine whether any of the consequences are considered punishing by the performer. If so, you will have located a cause of the problem.

Caution: It is sometimes easy to confuse consequences that are rewarding to you with those that are in fact punishing to others. For example, you may find it very pleasing to be able to reduce someone's budget when that person has performed efficiently, but the performer may consider that very same consequence to be decidedly punishing.

When desired performance leads to punishment the frequency of the desired performance will decrease. Simply put, people tend to spend their time doing those things that make their world brighter. The remedy here is to find one or more ways to reward, rather than punish people for doing things the way you say you want them done.

b. Are the performers being rewarded for doing it wrong? First, list all the things that happen to the performers when they perform in a way other than what is expected. Again, make sure you list only those consequences that directly affect the performers. Then, decide whether any of those consequences are considered rewarding by the performers. If they are, you will have located another cause of the problem. (If you are not sure, the fastest thing to do is to ask a performer.) The solution will be to remove the source of reward for undesired performance.

When undesired performance (slow work) leads to a rewarding situation (somebody else will do the work), there is no reason for the performer to want to do it differently. The remedy here is to make the assistants world dimmer rather than brighter when the work is not up to expectations.

c. Are there no consequences at all to the performer for performing, either right or wrong? Sometimes all "hell" breaks loose when someone does not perform in the desired way, but none of the "hell" lands on the performer. If the consequences for either good or poor performance do not affect the performer directly, chances are that desired performance will not continue for very long. When, from the performer's point of view, there are no consequences for either desired or undesired performance, it should not surprise anyone when "doing it the desired way" takes on a low priority for the performer.

d. Are there obstacles to doing it right? Check to see if the performers have the opportunity to do what you expect of them. Check at least for these obstacles:

- Do workers know what is expected of them?
- Do they have permission (authority) to perform?
- Do they have the time to perform?
- Do they have the tools and equipment needed?
- Do they have adequate space to perform?
- Is their workplace conducive to performing?
- Are they allowed to interact with those who have an impact on their work?

7. List the causes of the discrepancy. List the causes suggested by your answers to the previous questions. For example, if there are obstacles, list the obstacles to be removed. If some of the consequences for desired performance are punishing, list the punishing consequences.

8. Describe the solutions. Beside each of the causes you have listed, describe a suitable remedy. Try to be specific. Rather than

simply writing "remove punishment," describe how you will do that.

9. Estimate the cost of each solution. Write the estimate beside the solution. This step usually takes only a few seconds to complete, because the cost of most solutions will be negligible.

10. Select the solutions. Because you know the approximate cost of the problem and the cost of the solutions, it is usually easy to select the most cost-effective solution or combination of solutions. This is especially so when you involve others in planning the solutions. Select the least expensive solution(s) that address the problem (from among those that cost less than the problem) and that are practical—those that you actually have the authority to apply. It will not help, for example, to describe a solution that states, "A new corporate policy will ----," if you do not have any chance of getting such a policy written and implemented. Stay with solutions that you can actually manage.

Check to make sure that you have a solution that will address each of the problems you identified during the analysis.

11. Implement the solutions. Put the solutions into practice, and then monitor the situation to see how well the solutions are working. Your action plan should include a description of your intended outcome (what things will be like when your solutions have worked). The plan should also list the steps for accomplishing the outcome.

HOW TO WORK WITH TRAINERS

Managers routinely think they know when training is needed. They say to a trainer "I want a course," or "I need to have my people trained in basic electronics." This is a wrong approach. If you went to a doctor, you would insist on being examined and being allowed to describe your symptoms. You should do the same thing with a trainer.

Trainers skilled in their craft can, and are, eager to help you. They know how to train, of course, and they know how to do it efficiently. But they also know how to help you to avoid training when a cheaper and faster remedy will get the results you want. And when your people truly need training, trainers can get the job done in ways that will keep your people away from their jobs for the shortest time possible.

With that said, it is time to describe a strategy for getting the services you need from your trainers. Here is how to do it.

Ask for skills, ask for assistance with performance problems, ask for objectives to be derived, ask for job aids, manuals, feedback systems, for help with task or goal analyses, or for any other service. But do not ask for training. Why? If the training department is staffed by subject matter experts who do not know much about the training craft, and if you ask for training, you may get it, even if you do not need it. And that could cost you dearly. If it is staffed by expert trainers, they may have to find actual ways to convince you to take another look at the situation. And that could take time.

1. Describe the problem or ask for outcomes. Tell the trainers what your people need to be able to do that they cannot now do. Describe the machines they need to be able to operate, the tasks they need to be able to perform, the accomplishments they need to be able to achieve. Here are some examples of the approaches you might use:

   "My order takers do not know how to use the new software they will be getting next month."

   "My sales staff need to convert features of the new line into customer benefits."

2. Negotiate an agreement. Before you accept services, make sure you have an answer to the following questions:

   - What services are needed?
   - When will they be delivered?
   - What will they cost?
   - What will they be expected to accomplish?
   - How will we measure results?
   - What will I be expected to do, and when?

3. Verify that a performance-based approach will be used. Find out what kind of training approach the trainers intend to use. Because

it can make so much difference in how well the instruction works and in how much it will cost, you will want to make sure that a performance-based (or outcome-oriented) approach is used, not only for the development of the instruction, but for its delivery as well.

4. Assist in the derivation of the objectives. To derive the objectives of the training, someone will need to complete a task analysis so that everyone will be able to see the elements of what competent performers do when they do it. Good analysis can accomplish this step without intruding on your operation. They may have to watch competent performers at work, but they will know how to do that without being intrusive. Expect the analysts to be the soul of tact and discretion. If the training department sends you someone who acts even remotely like a bull in a china shop, throw the bum out and demand a more tactful person. You should not have to put up with anyone who does not know the craft.

 It is likely that a few goal analyses will have to be completed along the way. If they are indicated, you should make sure they get done. Do not forget: the degree to which you speak in abstracts is the degree to which you abdicate control to someone else to decide what you mean.

5. Sign off on the draft outcomes. Insist on signing off on the proposed objectives of the instruction before allowing development to begin. This will be your opportunity to make sure that you will not be paying for more instruction than you need. Those objectives will also serve as your "contract" with the trainers whose job it will be to perform according to the objectives.

 If you are thinking about using a course that is already being offered, either by your trainers or by vendors, ask for a copy of the course objectives. Compare that list against your own needs. If there is a match, the course probably will be useful to you. If there is little overlap between your own objectives and those of the existing course you are considering, reject it. Never mind what the course is called, reject it. It would only be a waste of your resources. And, of course, if

there are not any objectives to look at, do not waste your time with it.

6. Agree on the training location. There are a number of places where the training might be delivered, including: in a classroom, on-the-job, at a place close to the job, or in a combination of locations. You will want to negotiate a training location that will:

a. Remove your people from their work stations for the shortest time possible.
b. Ensure that they will have ample opportunity to practice the objectives to be achieved.
c. Be least distracting to the trainees.

 It is often less expensive and less time-consuming to arrange for the training to be done on the job or at some location near the job, such as in a room nearby. But don't choose that option unless you can provide a distraction-free environment for the training. A distracting learning environment will lead to less effective training that takes longer to complete. Managers who expect people to work and learn at the same time are fooling themselves. If there is something serious to be learned, it needs to be studied in a distraction-free environment. If that means a location away from the workplace, that is the option you should choose. Above all, select an option that will allow trainees to get practice in what they are learning.

7. Provide access. During the development of training, the developers will need two things from you:

 Access to information: If the developers are not experts in the subject matter that will be the target of the instruction, they will need access to that information. Make one or more competent performers available to them. If they know their jobs, the developers will know how to get the information they need in the least amount of time.

 Access to target trainees: Ultimately, the developers will want to test the instruction on one or more of the people for whom it is intended. Cooperate to the best of your ability. Tryout is important to the success of the training, and you will be doing yourself a favor by smoothing the way. If it is completely impossible to arrange for even a

small tryout of the instruction, demand that the first on-line course offering be considered a tryout. Do not let the trainers print more materials than will be needed for that first run-through; that way, you will not have to throw away materials that are made obsolete by the opportunities for improvement revealed by the tryout.

8. Prepare your trainees. Before you let your people head for the training, get them ready. Conduct a short goal-setting meeting during which you discuss the objectives of the instruction and the way in which the new skills will fit into the overall functioning of your organizational unit.

9. Stay clear of the training. While the training is going on, stay clear. You are an authority figure whose very presence will interfere with your people's ability to learn. Do not kid yourself into thinking that you are "one of the boys," whose presence will not be noticed. Do not distract them.

WHEN YOU NEED A NON-TRAINING SERVICE

If you need one or more other remedies to improve performance rather than training (remedies such as job aids, documentation, feedback system, or an incentive or reward system), here is what to do.

1. Meet with the training staff. Discuss the proposed remedies with one of the performance analysts in the training department. Try to reach agreement on who will do what to get the problem solved.

2. Review the draft of the proposed remedy. Check the draft when it arrives from the training staff. Make sure it addresses the problem that you need to solve. If the item involves print, such as a checklist, give the draft to one of your less experienced people to review. You might say something like, "Here is a draft of the checklist I told you about. I would appreciate your reviewing it to see if you think it will be easy to use. In particular, I would like you to try it out to make sure the size of the binder will be the most practical. Your suggestions will be welcome."

If the service involves feedback, or a change in the way performance consequences (rewards) will be handled, make sure the consequences suggested by the analysts will be within your control to use and favorably viewed by those who receive them.

3. Prepare your people. Regardless of the intervention being developed, it will smooth the way if you inform people of the coming change. If appropriate, get them involved in planning for the implementation.

4. Implement the remedy. Often a remedy can be implemented with no more fanfare than that of introducing or passing along the items in question. For example, you might just say, "Charlie, here is the checklist we discussed. Let me know how well it works," or "Erica, here is the user manual we had developed for the numerical controllers. When you use it, please mark any problems you find with it."

When the remedy involves more than just job aids, though, such as a change in policy or a change in organizational structure, applying the remedy successfully needs somewhat more attention. Even though you may have prepared your people for the change, do something when the change actually happens to convince them of your interest in successful application. A good way to do this is to be personally involved at the beginning. Tell people again how interested you are in making this solution work, and ask for their feedback.

5. Monitor the results. Be sure to monitor the situation shortly after the solution has been put on line. Check that it is working the way it is supposed to work. If it is no, call the analyst back in to see what adjustments might be needed.

Trainers skilled in their craft are prepared to solve problems rather than just train. The secret to getting the kind of services that will lead to peak performance from your staff is to make sure those problems are well defined before asking for services. If you don't have the time to do it, get an analyst to do it. But do it.

6. Keep the trainers informed. The more they know about your plans the better prepared they will be to help.

HOW TO GET YOUR MONEY'S WORTH

Now that your trainees will be returning from training with their new skills, it would be easy to conclude that the job is done. You have helped specify exactly what it is that your people need to be able to do that they could not do, and the trainers have prepared and delivered instruction that guarantees those skills are in place.

What more is there to do?

Remember the expression "Use it or lose it"? Well, if those skills are to be available when they are needed, and if they are to improve over time, it will be because of what you do when your trainees return. It is your turn to take action. After all, a contract is not complete until both parties have fulfilled their obligations. So the ball is now in your court. Here is why:

Successful job performance depends on four conditions: skill, self-confidence, the opportunity to perform, and a supportive environment. If the training was properly designed and executed, the trainers will have provided the first two of these conditions -- the skills and the confidence to apply the skills.

But only you can supply the opportunity to perform, and the supportive environment to maintain the performance. So you have a critical role to play when the trainees return from training. To get your money's worth from training, here are the few things that you need to do to keep the new skills from leaking out under the door.

WHEN THE TRAINEES RETURN TO THEIR JOBS

Ask for a skill list. You already have a list of the objectives that the instruction was supposed to accomplish. If the trainers don't provide you a list of the objectives accomplished by each trainee, or some other description of their demonstrated accomplishments, expect your trainees to bring it with them. This list will serve as a "window sticker," to identify what a person has accomplished. If you do not get such a list, ask for it. After all, there may be good reasons why trainees did not accomplish all of the objectives; there may also be reasons why trainees accomplished more than was expected.

Help trainees apply new skills. Do what you can to make sure the skills that have just been learned are used, preferably within a week or so of their being learned. Provide the necessary tools, authority, time, and space to do the things they just learned how to do. If you cannot arrange for immediate opportunities for the skills to be used on the job, find some way to provide periodic practice off-line. Use it or lose it.

MAKE THE PERFORMANCE EVEN BETTER

To make the learning stick, you need to get the skills used. To make the performance improve, do these things:

Check for obstacles to performance. It is easy for glitches to crop up once in awhile that get in the way of peak performance. And every once in awhile someone needs to do an obstacle sweep. Fortunately, that is not difficult. All you have to do is ask people if anything is interfering with their achieving the results you have prescribed. They will know, and they will be pleased that you should ask. So, ask -- because there can be all sorts of obstacles, large and small, that can get in the way of performance. Many obstacles can be eliminated with the wave of a hand. Here are a few examples:

- Inadequate tools or supplies
- Parts showing up late
- Work mounted at an awkward height
- Poorly arranged computer monitors or other frequently used equipment

So find the obstacles and get rid of them as best you can. Performance will improve, usually immediately. When you provide both opportunity to perform and a supportive environment, you can be assured that the skills you paid for will be there when they are needed.

Check for upside-down consequences. Because jobs and job conditions change, it is possible for the consequence structure (the structure of rewards and punishments) to get twisted out of shape. The results of doing a job right can become punishing, and the results of doing it wrong -- or not at all -- can become very attractive. So, it is worth finding out periodically

whether the consequences support (encourage) desired performance or discourage it.

Check for feedback. It does not matter how many times a day a person repeats a performance; unless the person gets feedback on the quality of that performance, he or she cannot be expected to improve. Without feedback, there will be no reason for a person to change or adjust what he or she is doing. There will be no reason to take corrective action.

Lots of tasks have performance feedback built in. In these cases, workers cannot help but find out whether their performance is or is not okay. For example, if a part does not fit, the worker knows that something needs to be done differently. If the subassembly does not check out, the worker knows that an error needs correction. In these instances, no special attention to feedback is needed.

It pays to ensure that there is adequate performance feedback for each of the job components. Fortunately, you do not have to do it all yourself. If your training and performance department provides the service, you can ask them to design any feedback systems you may need. Moreover, they can be called in periodically to do a feedback and consequence review, which is something like checking for safety hazards. Such a review is relatively simple to do and takes little time. It requires reviewing the desired performances and expected job accomplishments, and then checking to make sure that (a) there is feedback regarding the quality of the performances, and (b) the consequences for the desired performance and accomplishments are favorable rather than punishing.

Skilled analysts will be happy to work as your confidential assistant and will report their findings directly to you and to no one else. That will provide you clues to improve performance even more.

Recognize desired performance. People tend to continue to do those things for which they receive recognition and reward. If they continue to do them, and receive feedback regarding the quality of their performance, their performance very likely will improve over time. It pays, therefore, to catch people doing something right, and to let them know that you have noticed.

SUMMARY

This paper has taken a different approach to training. It has focused on performance improvement from a management point of view and not on training from the traditional trainer's viewpoint. The name of the game is not training but performance. A systems model stressing five steps was emphasized: performance analysis, cause analysis, interventions, implementation, and evaluation. This model enables the user to identify the gap between desired and actual performance. Once the gap is identified, then attention is directed toward the cause and interventions to correct the problem.

Some suggestions were given to assist managers in working with trainers. A basic rule of thumb was stressed: never ask the trainer for training. Ask for skills, assistance with performance problems, job aids, manuals, etc. The trainer will then have to conduct a needs analysis to determine the actual need or needs. Training may be the solution or a part of the solution in combination with other interventions.

If training was one of the solutions, the manager should ensure that the employees are given the opportunity to "use it or lose." Managers should remove any obstacles that may prevent the use of the knowledge and skills learned and seek feedback from the employees that may further enhance their performance.

Remember, the best results are achieved when management views trainers as partners in performance. Put them on the performance team. The results will be well worth the effort.

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