

Optimise Employee Training and Development

With cost cutting being a common occurrence in business, it is important to optimise employee training and development to ensure that both the organisation and the employee can get the best returns.

Employee development is too crucial to the success of the organisation to be sacrificed. However, there also are not unlimited funds for employees to attend every training that may be deemed useful.

A proper program needs to be in place to identify important training stints required to ensure money is well spent. It will also be necessary to fit in the training programs within the work schedule of the employees so that work is not disrupted.

The best way to do this is by having an employee development program on an annual basis. The key steps in this program should be as follows:

1. Employee Self Assessment

The first step is for the employees to do a self-assessment of the kind of development required. The assessment will be based on the person's job scope and performance plan for the year.

Based on this, the employee can review both internal and external training programs and identify those best suited. In addition to this, opportunities to work in specific projects should also be included.

The employee should also consider the future role and function that he or she aspires for. The intent is to share this future plan with the manager so that they can also plan for the employee's future aspirations. All these should be documented in a self-assessment form.

2. Document The Employee Development Plan

The manager will meet each of the people reporting to him individually, to go through the completed assessment form

by the employee. This provides the manager with an opportunity to review and provide feedback on the employee's plan.



The manager also has the opportunity to suggest other training programs that the employee may not be aware of. This includes opportunities to work with another team as part of skill development, as the manager probably has a broader view of the organisational activities.

In cases where the number of training days exceeds the guidance provided by the organisation, it will be necessary to prioritise the training programs.

This whole exercise provides the manager with an overview of the training cost. The employees will be able to identify the training programs that are already scheduled and block it off in their calendars, so that they can plan their work activities around this. While this helps, there might be times when the employee may have to forego some of the training due to work pressures.

Feedback should also be provided on the employee's future plans. Knowing this helps the manager in two ways. In the immediate future, he could arrange for the employee to be assigned to some other project or team to gain experience and exposure on his or her desired future role.

The significance of this is also in the fact that this request can be noted down, so that when such a role becomes available, the employee can be recommended for it.

An employee development planning form should be used to document the training and development plan details. An action plan should be included with planned dates for the training and subsequent reviews of the plan.

3. Periodic Reviews

An employee development plan can be effective only if it is regularly reviewed to ensure that the planned actions are being done or changed as required.

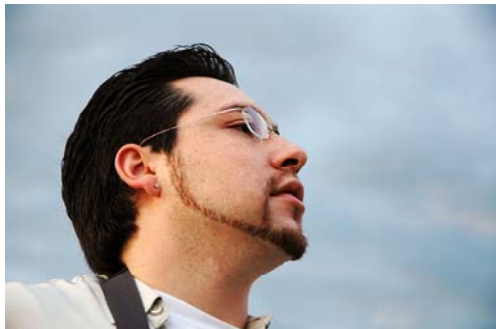
Even if the plan is done with the best of intentions, the daily activities take over and unless these reviews are done, the development activities will not get the priority that they should get. The employee development plan should be reviewed quarterly or at least every four months.

It may sound like a laborious task, but doing these steps streamlines the employee development exercise. The employees also feel that the organisation cares for them.

The best way to do this is to block off these activities in your calendar right at the beginning of the year. Your other activities should be worked around these. However, if you need to miss one of these due to some good reasons, then make sure you reschedule.

Well-planned and executed employee training and development brings benefits to both the organisation and the employee. This, in turn, will benefit your customers who ultimately decide the continued success of the organisation.

Effective Training Techniques Through Employee Involvement



Employee involvement is key to effective employee training. Employees attending training are preoccupied with their own thoughts and problems. Some are willing to learn and some are not. There are those who are open to new ideas and others who resist. How can you get them involved so that they can take ownership of their own learning during the training?

1. Put Yourself In The Learners' Shoes

When delivering training, there is course content to be covered. While this is important, priority has to be given to the fact that the learners are able to receive your content.

What better way than to put yourself into the learners' shoes and ask yourself a few questions that these learners have when attending training:

- What is this session about?
- Will it be of use to me?
- How can I apply this to the real world?
- What motivates me to attend this session?
- Is the content delivered in an easy and simple way?
- Are different teaching methods involved or is it a boring lecture?

Answering these questions to yourself will help you better prepare to deliver effective training.

2. Assessing Learner Needs

Checking out on learner needs is essential to get learner involvement. This task could be difficult due to time, budget or information constraints. However, it is important and some kind of assessment will make a difference.

Some points for investigating learner needs are as follows:

- How many participants will be attending the session?
- What are their current job responsibilities?
- What are their skill levels as applicable to the training subject?
- Is attendance voluntary or mandatory?
- How will the training affect their current or future job responsibilities?

If this investigation is not possible before the training session, then when the session starts, it is a good idea to request the participants to introduce themselves and to mention what they would like to achieve from the training session.

3. Communicate With Your Learners

Communicating the objectives and program outline to the course attendees before the session will help them prepare for the training. Properly written, this communication can also be used to motivate the learners such that they will have a positive outlook towards the training.

If this is not done for some reason, then it is important that this be done at the start of the training.

Communication is two ways. Therefore, feedback from the learners must be somehow incorporated into the training.

This is extra work. It will be much easier to just deliver the content as is, but the purpose of the training is to enable the learner via effective training, not just delivering content.

4. Switch On The Learners

However well you may be prepared to deliver the session, if the learners are not switched on, the training will not be very effective. Switched on learners will be ready to receive content, which means there is a need to conduct activities to achieve this.

Switching on activities include creative opening exercises that develop positive first impressions, which are crucial to gaining learner commitment. These warm up activities are learner-centred and content-relevant.

The intent is to get learner involvement and for the trainer to develop relationships with the learners. These are not the same as icebreakers, which are usually used to entertain and energise learners.

When people arrive at the training venue, they are probably still preoccupied with their own problems and thoughts. The warm up exercises will also be a means of addressing this.

Employee training can be made effective with some extra effort in getting their involvement and hence ownership for the training.

You will find that the extra work pays off because you will find the session much more satisfying and feedback from the attendees will be positive.

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