

Five Steps to Realizing Workforce Training Success



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Introduction

Effective workforce training and development is a process. This process takes time, effort and dedication to make it successful. The process also demands a range of activities that all support the overall training and development objectives. Training typically fails because the people or departments in charge of training in an organization do not understand that a successful training program requires several steps. However, if these steps are clearly identified, potential pitfalls and problems are uncovered in advance, thus allowing a greater chance for a successful training program. There are essentially five steps that can help an organization realize the most value from their training: investigate, plan, develop, implement and document.

These five steps follow a progressive sequence that links drivers to outcomes. As companies realize the need for training, they must investigate the drivers for training and gain an understanding of what is needed. After the investigation stage, the company must strategically connect training to business goals via planning. The training and business drivers defined during planning then leads to development of the blended learning model. Development then leads to the implementation stage of training, which will establish the future success of the program. Multiple activities must come together at the start of this implementation stage to ensure that your training initiative has full traction and utilization. If the timing is off, it is hard to recover. Finally, successful training programs require documentation of results and an analysis of activity. This takes time but is absolutely necessary to gauge the impact of the training already conducted and to begin the investigation process for the next round of training.

Simply following these steps does not ensure success, but the process allows for a much greater chance that the training will produce a positive impact on the organization. In the following pages, each of the five steps to training success will be discussed in detail, with an emphasis on the proper focus areas during each stage.

Goals of Training and Development

In today's business environment, the idea of setting goals sounds like something that should be second nature. Everyday business demands goal setting. The same is true for training and development. Nevertheless, training and development programs often follow the philosophy that "if you build it, they will come." In today's fast-paced work environments, this is simply not the case. A world-class training and development department could be launched within a company, and without following the proper steps, it would not succeed. There must be a plan, definitions of what will be accomplished and goals set. This can be done in any and all levels throughout an organization, but with management's help, it becomes quite easy.

In order to establish a world-class training and development program, management must assist in setting attainable goals and must understand the expected results. When training is being considered, the key people must be involved from the start. This helps ensure that the program will be established and implemented with key stakeholders already in place. This also helps you anticipate questions or concerns that may arise from key stakeholders. Two key questions almost always emerge at this stage:

1. *How is the training going to affect employees?*
2. *How will the organization benefit from the training?*

In order to answer these questions, proper planning and preliminary work must be completed, the training must be launched in an organized manner and the results must be documented. Every training and development program is dynamic, but following these organized steps helps make the program a success.

Step 1 - Investigate

All future steps of a training program depend on the Investigation Stage. Companies that train successfully have already made the cultural commitment to training and recognize that training and development is essential to succeed in today's increasingly competitive global markets. As a company adopts training, management must begin to gain a better understanding of their workforce's "present state" as well as how they expect to benefit from a more highly educated workforce. During this Investigation Stage, several key activities occur:

1. Manufacturing training needs analysis
 - The manufacturing training needs analysis reveals where the current and future workforce can benefit from training efforts. In addition, the analysis helps determine in which areas the company is stronger, and therefore helps prioritize training activities.
2. Job shadowing
 - Job shadowing entails an individual or team shadowing each job in the company where training is being considered.
3. Interviewing key stakeholders
 - All key stakeholders are involved from the beginning when considering workforce training. Both management and the students should be interviewed, and the concerns and questions from both groups are then documented. By engaging management in all phases, the training program gains an identity and visibility throughout the organization. Additionally, by involving the students from the start, the investigation stages helps foster a sense of pride in the training program.
4. Identifying and prioritizing areas that could benefit from training
 - During this stage, management must determine what areas need training and which target areas will provide the greatest/quickest value to the company.
5. Analyzing the possible benefits from training
 - During this activity, the company must fully document the benefits that will be realized from workforce training. This must include the benefits to the individual learner as well as to the organization.

Step 2 - Plan

The Planning Stage closely follows the Investigation Stage. Together, Investigation and Planning activities strategically connect the workforce training and development to business goals for the company. The reasons to conduct training differ for individual companies, ranging from improved competitiveness, to better productivity, to scrap reduction on the manufacturing floor, to eliminating downtime. There are several key activities during this Planning Stage:

1. Develop a strategic training plan

- The training plan must be well-defined and developed so that all people involved are well-informed of what needs to be done and how it will be accomplished. Often, the key factor during planning is deciding how to correlate business drivers to the actual training and development plan. This sounds like common sense, but it is often overlooked. Management may realize that training of the workforce is necessary and begin to train without understanding how it affects business. The proper way to develop this strategic training plan is to look at what needs to be improved or maintained by the company in order to be successful. This is where training should begin, and this is where the strategic training plan will help.

2. Define the scope of the training program

- For a training program to succeed, it must be carried out in manageable stages. Because companies have limited resources (both in terms of personnel and finances), proper staging is essential. The scope of the program not only defines the entire breadth of the training initiative, but also defines each step along with its expected completion.

3. Establish procedures

- To ensure that the training program will be a success, organization and consistency are keys. This organization and consistency is carried out through the establishment of procedures for the training program. These procedures can address a range of activities, from the way training programs are presented to students, to the way the data from the training is reported to management.

4. Write a training business case

- The business case allows the people in charge of the training within the company to formally document why the training is needed and how it will be beneficial to the company. An effective business case includes the mission and the vision of the training program, along with the details on how the training will be completed, including benchmarks and outcomes.

Step 3 - Develop

The Development Stage is the next crucial step to follow when building a training program for a company. This stage may at first appear easily understandable, but it can be overlooked without proper planning. During development, management considers what curriculum is needed for each person or group of persons, and then builds programs around those needs. If this is not done effectively, the result is that students may be asked to take training that is not needed or may be simply overwhelmed by the amount of training that is required. An effective Development Stage contains these key activities:

1. Determine courses needed

- The core of a training program is the curriculum presented to students. Key stakeholders should be involved in selecting what courses will be applicable to what students or groups of students. Simply put, training cannot occur without this stage. However, there is a significant difference between an “intuitive,” informal, or haphazard selection of curriculum vs. a more strategic, explicit, and accurate curriculum. The previous investigative and planning stages help ensure the latter is the result.

2. Determine blended learning programs

- The blended learning approach emphasizes the distinct benefits of different delivery methods and combines these benefits to create the most effective learning experience. There are certain concepts and ideas that translate very well to online training and that can be delivered most cost efficiently with this method. In

Because manufacturers need people with both hands-on ability and knowledge of metalworking theory, a training initiative will likely fail without a blended approach that tackles these components properly.

contrast, some topics demand traditional face-to-face learning, particularly if the topic is best learned through simultaneous conversation and questioning with an instructor. A blended learning approach incorporates different training media to address a range of learning styles, as well as account for the entire “hierarchy” or taxonomy of learning: from knowledge and comprehension, to hands-on application, to higher levels

such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The tricky part is identifying where all methods can be utilized in the most efficient manner so that the company and the employee gain the most benefit and meet the original stated goals of the training program.

3. Setup competency programs

- When a company prepares to launch a training program, the company must realize that manufacturing-specific training demands a unique dynamic between theory and practice. Face-to-face or web-based training may be an ideal means for teaching the theory of manufacturing, but eventually, that theory must be put to practice. By building competency plans that link theory courses to hands-on practice, the company will get the most value from the training program.

Step 4 - Implement

The Implementation Stage inevitably happens, regardless of the degree of prior planning. However, implementation is as crucial as the prior steps, if not more so. The organization of a program launch is crucial to the training program's success. If the implementation of the training program is lacking, the adoption rate of the program may suffer. Poor early adoption is a severe obstacle to overcome. Conversely, if the training program is implemented effectively, the company may realize value more quickly. Several key activities must occur during the Implementation Stage:

Multiple activities must come together at the start of this implementation stage to ensure that your training initiative has full traction and utilization. If the timing is off, it is hard to recover.

1. **Registration of students**
 - Each student must be registered prior to taking the initial training courses. This helps motivate each student and also helps to effectively launch the program. If this step is not completed, there are often delays in training program adoption.
2. **Student training**
 - All students involved in the training program must be prepared for what classes are required training, and how those classes will be presented to them. This should be done prior to the launch of the program so that students are well-versed with the training format and structure. Such aspects as mode of delivery (face-to-face, online), start dates, expected completion dates and expected results should be covered. Students benefit from knowing upfront the expectations of the training program.
3. **Administrator training**
 - Successful training also depends on the administrators who monitor the activity in the program. These administrators should be trained on the expectations of the program along with any technical requirements that they will have to utilize to assist in making the program a success. A training program without administrators that understand what is expected will fail.

4. Launch meetings

- Several kick-off meetings should be conducted to launch the training program. These meetings will detail why training is being conducted and what the benefits will be to the student and the company. These programs should also strive to motivate the student.

5. Marketing of the training program

- Internal marketing of the training program contributes greatly to its success. Before and after the launching of the training program, internal marketing helps keep the training on the students' minds to ensure adoption and utilization. The marketing can be done in many ways, such as WebEx, phone conferences, PowerPoint presentations, testimonials and scheduled refresher courses.

Step 5 - Document

The Documentation Stage is the final step in the training program process. It is important during this stage for a company to look at key indicators to see if the training program was successful. This will

A successful training program requires documentation of results and analysis of activity – a necessary function for gauging the impact of training.

assist in determining what needs to be done in the future. Some examples of those key indicators could be productivity changes, profitability changes, scrap reduction, process improvements and downtime reduction. In some ways, documentation is also the beginning.

In addition, documenting the successes and possible areas of improvement of a training program completes the training cycle but also determines actions for the next training initiative. There are two steps that should be completed during the Documentation Stage:

1. Reports on training completed
 - Reports on the training completed should be documented and utilized to recognize successes. In addition these reports should identify areas where more training may be needed.
2. Reports on future training steps
 - When training is finished, successes should be celebrated and shortcomings should be recognized.
 - This step builds off of the one above and should formally address what the next steps will be in regards to continued training. The further development of employees and benefits to the company should be documented.

Conclusion

Effective workforce development and training is rapidly becoming more essential to a company's success. As global competition increases, the defining difference between organizations will be their workforce. Training is a process that consists of a series of steps that, when followed effectively, produce the value and results that drive company advancements. It has been said that there are no shortcuts to success--this statement is true as well when dealing with workforce training.



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