

EVALUATION OF THE ON-THE-JOB
TRAINING PROGRAM
AT COMPANY X

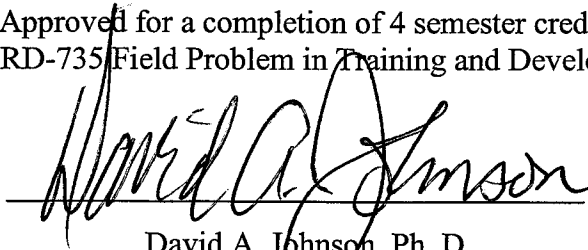
By

KRISTY K. MARTIN

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the
Master of Science Degree in
Training and Development

Approved for a completion of 4 semester credits
TRHRD-735 Field Problem in Training and Development

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David A. Johnson", is written over a horizontal line.

David A. Johnson, Ph. D.
Research Advisor

The Graduate School
University of Wisconsin-Stout
August, 2004

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Abstract

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<u>An Evaluation of the On-the-Job Training Program at Company X</u>
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This study obtains feedback from trainers, trainees, and supervisors at Company X to evaluate the existing structured on-the-job training (OJT) program for production and material control operators. Company X's structured OJT program began in 2001 and includes training manuals specific to each job, designated trainers, performance checklists for documenting the training, and a support system for follow-up and feedback.

Chapter I introduces the organization, its existing OJT program, and the purpose and objectives of this study. Chapter II reviews literature that defines OJT and its history, describes common OJT problems, identifies components of

successful structured OJT programs, and includes benefits of and barriers to OJT. Chapter III and IV detail the research methodology used to collect the feedback on Company X's OJT program, as well as the results of the surveys. Surveys were conducted at three levels of the organization: production team advisors (supervisors), trainers who had conducted OJT under the current system, and employees who had been trained under the system. Chapter V concludes the study with recommendations for improvement to Company X's structured OJT program.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Introduction to the Field Problem

The focus of this study is to obtain feedback from associates about the on-the-job training (OJT) program at a food manufacturing company, and to make recommendations for improvement. At the request of the company, the actual name is not disclosed. Throughout this study, the company will be referred to as Company X.

Company X instituted a structured OJT program for production and material control operators in 2001. Since that time, no formal research has been done to evaluate the effectiveness of the system. Company X is looking to expand its program into other areas, including Quality Control and Maintenance. Before moving ahead and modeling after what has been done in production and material control, it is important to obtain feedback on the existing program to determine its strengths and opportunities for improvement.

This study will research components of successful OJT programs, as well as the initial objectives of the program at Company X. Team Advisors (supervisors), trainers, and trainees (existing and former) will be interviewed to determine the program's strengths and opportunities for improvement. These findings will be used by Company X to ensure that they develop effective OJT in quality control, maintenance, and any subsequent departments, and to enhance the existing program in production and material control.

Introduction to Company X

Company X is one of the largest food manufacturers in the world, with 508 factories in 85 countries (including 39 in the United States) and over 250,000 employees worldwide. This study focuses specifically on one of the manufacturing facilities in the United States, located in the Midwest and employing just over 500 associates in a unionized facility. This site is part of the organization's nutrition division, manufacturing nutritional products that are highly regulated by the Food and Drug Administration, competing with large pharmaceutical companies in both retail and medical settings.

Company X's OJT Program

Prior to 2001, Company X did not have a structured OJT program. When new associates joined the organization, they were informally paired up with co-workers who would show them what to do. There were no formal training materials, except Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) which outlined the steps to take to complete a given task. Employees were required to read SOPs and acknowledge that they had done so on a designated form. This documentation proved that employees had read the procedures, but there was no written proof that they had received hands-on training, and there was no process to verify that they were proficient in the tasks of their job.

There were no designated trainers identified at Company X. Employees were paired up informally, and those conducting the training were not provided any formal instruction in how to effectively train others.

As with many unstructured OJT programs, this was not particularly successful. There was a lack of accountability for mistakes (it was quite easy to say “I was never trained on that”), there was little consistency between shifts, and it often took new employees a great deal of time to be fully comfortable and knowledgeable in the tasks of their job. In an industry that is highly regulated, with little room for quality errors, managers at Company X recognized the need for structured OJT.

They hired two full-time training and development team advisors who were tasked in 2001 with creating a structured OJT program for nineteen production and material control jobs in the factory. While they looked forward to reaping a number of benefits from structured OJT, the program was primarily intended to:

- Ensure that all new employees and transfers received consistent training, with no tasks overlooked
- Provide documentation of OJT progress and completion, thus improving accountability
- Provide trainers with the tools and knowledge to be effective in training others
- Reduce the time it took for employees to feel comfortable performing the tasks of their jobs safely and efficiently
- Provide structured follow-up and support to trainees and trainers throughout the training process

Working with expert operators and functional area experts (such as safety and quality), and referencing Standard Operating Procedures, the training and development team advisors designed a system which includes training manuals specific to each job, performance checklists for documenting the training, train-the-trainer courses for trainers, and structured support and follow-up. Under this system, once the training and development team advisor receives notice that a new hire or transfer will be starting in a given work area, the following occurs:

1. A rollout meeting is held between the training and development team advisor, the trainee, the trainer, and the trainee's team advisor. This meeting introduces the OJT process and materials and clarifies roles, responsibilities, and expectations.
2. Each day, the trainer and trainee set daily plans, based on what has been learned already, what remains to be learned, and the production schedule. This may include input from the team advisor.
3. The trainer teaches the employees the tasks of the job, using a four-step Tell, Show, Do, Review model
4. Each day, the trainer and trainee record what has been accomplished on the Performance Checklist for that particular job.
5. The team advisor checks in with the trainer and trainee at least weekly to discuss progress and to comment on the performance checklist. Formal performance reviews take place at 30, 60, and 90 days. (Depending on the job, training may or may not be completed during this time.)

6. A training and development team advisor checks in periodically as well, to monitor the progress and offer assistance as needed
7. When all tasks have been signed off on, the trainer, trainee, and team advisor complete a final sign-off on the documentation. Training completion is logged in the company's learning management system database, and training records are filed.

Problem Statement

The problem of this study is to obtain feedback from trainees (past and present), trainers, and team advisors about the on-the-job training (OJT) program at Company X and make recommendations for enhancing. Given the nature of their business and the increasingly competitive market in which they operate, it is important that Company X have a highly effective OJT program to consistently and thoroughly train new hires and transfers on the skills of their jobs. Feedback from this study will be used as part of Company X's focus on continuous improvement, identifying strengths to maintain and areas to focus on improving. This information will also be used as Company X expands structured OJT into other departments.

Research Objectives

The four objectives of this research project are to

1. identify characteristics of effective structured on-the-job training programs
2. describe the structure of the on-the-job training program at Company X
3. determine the level with which Company X team advisors, trainers, and trainees find their on-the-job training program effective

4. make recommendations for enhancing the on-the-job training program at Company X

Needs Statement

Eighty to ninety percent of an employee's job knowledge and skills are learned through OJT, and up to 1/3 of an employee's first year salary is devoted to OJT costs (Jacobs, 1995). In the past, many companies paid little attention to the importance of OJT, keeping their training relatively unstructured. It was common practice for employees to be paired up with a co-worker to "show them the ropes." This co-worker may have been an expert at the job, but was often not a skilled trainer. With unstructured OJT, there was usually no training manual or checklist, and little formality to the program. Instead, managers crossed their fingers, hoping employees learned what they needed to know, and hoping they learned it correctly.

The situation was no different at Company X. While their "buddy system" may have been the standard in the past, this approach came with consequences, as earlier identified. In 2001, Company X made the move to structured OJT, starting with their production and material control positions. In Company X's industry, it is critical that employees learn their jobs thoroughly and correctly, based on Standard Operating Procedures and federal regulations. There is little room for shortcuts or errors in this environment.

Four years later, with continuous improvement as a key performance initiative, with an increasingly competitive marketplace, and a drive to be a low-cost, highly efficient operation, it is a prime opportunity to evaluate the current OJT program to determine what is working well and what should be enhanced as they move into the future. This information will also be helpful

as the organization expands the OJT program into other job positions, such as Quality Control and Maintenance.

Definitions

The definitions that follow apply to workforce training in general or to Company X specifically:

OJT (On the Job Training): Instruction occurring in the work setting and during the work (Rothwell and Kazanas, 1994).

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP): Official work instructions that outline steps to follow for a specific work task (Company X, 2004).

Structured OJT: The planned process of developing task-level expertise by having an experienced employee train a novice employee at or near the actual work setting (Rothwell and Kazanas, 1994).

Team Advisor: A salaried employee who supervises the employees and the activities of a specific work area on a designated shift (Company X). In many other organizations, this person is referred to as the supervisor.

Trainee: Production or material control associate that is new to the work area, either by being newly hired at Company X or by transferring to the area from another job position (Company X).

Trainer: Production or material control associate designated to train another employee on the skills and tasks of the job. This person delivers the training, provides feedback to the team advisor and the trainee, and documents the training (Company X).

Training and Development Team Advisor: Professional with a background in training who is responsible for researching, designing, developing, and evaluating various training programs at Company X, including the development and coordination of the structured on-the-job training program (Company X).

Unstructured OJT: Informal system of learning by job shadowing where trainee follows the trainer around and observes or performs work (Rothwell and Kazanas, 1994).

Limitations of the Study

This research is being conducted at only one site in one organization- Company X. Information obtained through this study will be primarily qualitative, based on feedback from team advisors, trainers, and trainees. Results will not be quantitative, as benchmarking data (such as average amount of time to train individuals) was not calculated by Company X prior to the structured OJT system.

This study will be conducted in a short period of time (3 months). Therefore, while recommendations for improvement will be made, the implementation and impact of these recommendations will not be measured as part of this study.

Further, this field problem will reflect only the OJT program at this site of Company X. Results should not be generalized to other Company X facilities, or to other businesses, without further study and research.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

Introduction

The second chapter of this study will define and discuss on-the-job training (OJT). Topics explored in this research include the history of training, defining OJT, common problems, components of successful programs, benefits of OJT, and barriers to effective OJT.

History of OJT

Formalized training dates back to the late 1800's and is primarily attributed to Fredrick Winslow Taylor, an American engineer. Taylor's approach was to study a task, engineer it for high productivity, and teach it as a step-by-step process. His goal was to improve the way work was performed, so it required less time and effort, therefore increasing productivity. Taylor introduced formalized training to provide employees with the knowledge and skills to perform valuable work. He was also instrumental in convincing business leaders that they could train unskilled workers to practice a trade or perform a factory operation that required skill and precision. This allowed industry to draw from an unskilled population to create and enhance its workforce (Pepitone, 1995).

Taking training a step further, the concept of planned OJT became known as a result of U.S. wartime efforts in World War I. Charles Skipper Allen introduced a method of training shipbuilders that included the following four-step approach to training (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1994):

- Show- demonstrate to the learners what they should do

- Tell- explain what they should do and how they should do it
- Do- allow learners to try out the tasks
- Check- follow up with learners, praising what is right and providing feedback in areas to improve

Allen believed that training should be carried out by supervisors, and he focused the training specifically on the job to be learned, not on the individual learner. During WWII, his method was expanded to what is known as Job Instruction Training (JIT), including seven steps (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1994):

1. Show learners how to perform the task
2. Review key points
3. Allow learners to watch the task performed a second time
4. Allow learners to perform simple parts of the task
5. Guide learners to perform the whole job
6. Let learners perform the whole job, but monitor performance
7. Release learners from training to perform on their own

This seven-step system became known as Job Instruction Training. It resulted in increased production in the wartime industries.

Defining On-the-Job Training

Training in business and industry is comprised of many facets. It includes preparing new hires for job duties, enhancing the skills of current employees, teaching soft skills, educating employees about legal issues, complying with federally-regulated mandates, and much more. Training, as a whole, encompasses any education given to employees to improve their knowledge, skill level, or performance.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher will specifically explore OJT, defined as “instruction occurring in the work setting and during the work” (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1994). Simply put, OJT involves training on the tasks of a given job, in the work area itself, such as a production operator being trained directly on the assembly line. Often, OJT is conducted one-on-one, between an individual and his/her trainer.

There are several ways to position the coordination of training within a company. Many organizations position training under human resources, to align it with other personnel initiatives. This is especially common in organizations that use OJT as a basis for compensation and promotions. This makes it easy to monitor outcomes and align training with corporate strategies and missions. On the downside, some believe this method places training too far away from production demands and hands-on knowledge (Carnevale, A., Gainer, L., & Schulz, E., 1990). Other organizations position training directly through plant operations. Using this method, line workers, who know the most about the tasks at hand, along with their supervisors design, develop, and deliver training to new co-workers, as well as conducting cross-training and re-

training. The involvement of production experts is a great benefit. However, with this organization, training is often overshadowed by production demands.

Many organizations combine the two structures, including subject matter experts in the development, design, and delivery, along with human resources personnel who are familiar with adult learning principles. This combination, if organized effectively, proves very successful in many companies.

Unstructured OJT, as described earlier, is haphazard, not planned around the needs of the learner and, instead, is driven by work demands. It usually involves following a coworker around. “The new worker observes practices, learns by trial and error, and occasionally receives direct instruction, if the experienced worker does not feel threatened by the competition” (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1994).

Structured OJT, on the other hand, is “the planned process of developing task-level expertise by having an experienced employee train a novice employee at or near the actual work setting.” (Jacobs & Jones, 1995). Structured OJT requires an investment of time and effort and, in return, can be expected to achieve objectives more so than unstructured OJT.

Common Problems with OJT

Regardless of their intentions, many OJT programs lack the efficiency and consistency they need to be effective. According to Gary Sisson in Hands On Training, this often stems from four problems. First, the trainer’s primary mission is to complete the work at hand, and few allowances are made for training (Sisson, 2001). The trainee shadows the trainer in the work area, while the trainer performs actual work. Trying to do double-duty between training

and working, it is clear that the work is the top priority. Sisson (2001) recommends that organizations free up time for the trainer and trainee to focus on learning. While they will perform job duties as part of that learning, the top priority should be learning, not production output.

Secondly, the production schedule often provides the structure for training. Whatever tasks are on the work agenda for the day are what the training focuses on, regardless of the frequency or difficulty of the task. This often results in trainees begin exposed to complicated tasks before they learn the basics, and they may be trained on rare tasks before they learn the day-to-day parts of their job.

Also, many companies are not selective enough in choosing trainers. We all know people who are great subject matter experts. This, however, does not automatically make them the best training candidates. Instead, companies should look for a combination of job knowledge and training skills when selecting their designated trainers.

Lastly, training methods are often overlooked in OJT programs. The program may outline what to train, but not how to train it. This leaves the method- usually some form of “show” or “tell” up to the trainer. Some trainers use more of the “watch me” style, while others will do most of their training by telling. This leads to inconsistency between trainers, and overall inconsistency in the program.

Sisson recommends teaching trainers the “HOT POPPER” method of **H**ands **O**n **T**raining. **P**repare for training, **O**pen the session, **P**resent the subject, **P**ractice the skills, **E**valuate the performance, and **R**eview the subject.

Components of Effective On-the-Job Training Programs

Each OJT program differs from the next, yet there are components that can be seen throughout successful programs. The most important facet of any training program is structure. As mentioned earlier, any type of instruction that focuses on the tasks of an employee's job can be classified as OJT. However, a formalized program takes things a step further-- incorporating designated trainers, a structured curriculum, and ongoing supervisory support.

Selecting trainers for OJT is a critical step. Designated trainers are usually chosen from within the work area. Effective trainers are generally subject matter experts, but subject-matter expertise does not guarantee an effective trainer. "Effective trainers must be able to communicate their knowledge clearly, use various instructional techniques, have good interpersonal skills, and have the ability to motivate others to learn" (DeSimone & Harris, 1994).

Train-the-Trainer programs are a popular tool to prepare selected employees for their role as a trainer. These programs are designed to give subject-matter experts the skills needed to effectively train others. A study conducted in 1990 surveyed organizations to determine the topics most commonly included in in-house train-the-trainer programs regarding OJT (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1994). Their findings are included in Table 1 as follows:

Table1: Train the Trainer Programs

Topic	% of train-the-trainer programs that include this topic
Showing learners how to perform the task	96.2
Having learners perform the task with the trainer observing	96.2
Putting learners at ease	94.3
Providing feedback to learners on how well they are performing	94.1
Demonstrating all steps of effective OJT	92.3
Emphasizing key points for learners to remembers	90.6
Analyzing work tasks or procedures	90.4
Motivating learners to learn	90.4
Telling learners how to perform a task	90.4
Applying adult learning theory to OJT	88.5
Questioning learners on key points in what they are learning	88.5
Clarifying the learners' performance standards	86.8
Placing learners in the correct work setting to learn the task	86.5
Showing learners how to correct errors they make	84.3
Finding out what learners already know about the task	80.8
Documenting training progress	79.6
Modifying OJT methods based on individuals learning styles	65.4
Modifying OJT methods to deal with learning disabilities	52.0

As this table shows, over 88% of train-the-trainer programs include lessons on Adult Learning Theory. Many training experts point out that this is a crucial piece of any train-the-trainer program, as many adults overlook the importance of how we learn when training others. Training is shown to be much more successful if built on these four principles (Pike, 2000):

- Adults must be viewed as individuals with unique values, attitudes, expectations, comfort levels, and past experiences
- Adults want to be involved in their own learning through engaging dialogue and hands-on practice
- What adults are taught must be perceived as useful to them
- Adult learnings must be reinforced through opportunities for feedback, time for practice, and verifying comprehension

Structured curriculum in the OJT itself is also very important. Set objectives and training layout allow both the trainee and trainer to understand the purpose and expectations at hand. Companies that have Standard Operating Procedures for job tasks typically use these as a basis for the curriculum.

One method of collecting information for OJT curriculum is through the Task Analytic Training System (TATS) developed by Diane Walter (Walter, 2001). TATS brings experts and trainees from the work area itself together to form a design team. This design team is facilitated by someone outside of the work area, such as a training coordinator. The team works together to determine objectives, design content, and implement the program. A second team, made up of technical experts (such as quality and safety) approves the material at various points along the

way. This team approach to developing OJT pulls the information directly from the job incumbents, who do the work every day, and it creates a high sense of ownership for the program.

This structure ensures that each trainee is given the same training, and the same material is covered each time. OJT is generally a very hands-on type of learning. When the trainee performs the task, in the actual work setting, it provides a foundation for evaluating progress against the expectations.

OJT programs lend themselves well to a check-sheet approach. Typically, as items are learned, both the trainee and trainer initial the checksheet. Checksheets are used to keep training consistent from one trainee to another (ensuring that the same tasks are taught every time and nothing is overlooked).

Checksheets provide a benefit to all three key players in the training: the trainer, the trainee, and the supervisor (Levine, 1997). The trainer uses the checksheet to identify what tasks and/or topics to cover throughout the training, and to keep track of which have been completed. The trainee benefits by knowing what is expected on them and what they have left to accomplish at any given time. Checksheets provide the supervisor with a way to monitor progress.

At the completion of training, checksheets become documented proof that the associate is able to perform the job to a specific performance level. It is important to note, however, that training curriculum needs to be evaluated and updated on an ongoing basis.

Even with a structured curriculum and plan, OJT is likely to falter without clearly defined and understood roles and expectations for the trainee, trainer, and supervisor. (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1994).

The trainee should:

- come to the job with a positive attitude
- possess the basic skills needed to meet the entry level requirements
- be open to, and take responsibility for, learning
- take notes, ask questions, and show interest

At a minimum, trainers should be expected to:

- approach newcomers with a positive attitude about the learning task and the work environment
- explain what to do and why the task is important
- provide social support during the learning
- possess interpersonal skills to preserve the learner's self-esteem
- take responsibility for the training they offer
- serve as positive role models
- make few assumptions about what the learner already knows

Area supervisors are responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the work area. The priorities they establish will either emphasize or overshadow training. Supervisors should be sure to:

- stress the importance of OJT with the entire team
- build in flexibility to allow for training time
- frequently follow up to check the progress of training and determine what additional help may be needed
- provide ongoing feedback and support to the trainer and trainee

In addition to the supervisor, whose main directive is to run production, successful systems include an additional person to support the trainee and trainer. This role is often filled by a training professional such as a training manager or coordinator.

Benefits of On-The-Job Training

It is widely recognized that a business is only as good as its employees. In order to remain competitive and sustain a profit, businesses need strong, skilled employees to turn out a high-quality product. Providing the right training fosters that quality and gives organizations a competitive advantage.

We've all experienced the challenge of learning a new job at one time or another. To a new employee, often overwhelmed with so much to learn and do, a structured OJT program can mean a world of difference. OJT gives the employee a sense of what it is like to perform the job under actual working conditions (Rothwell & Benkowski, 2002). An unstructured approach to OJT can prolong the learning period and increase anxiety, often prompting the employee to quit the job.

As Martin Broadwell explains in The Supervisor and On the Job Training, “the new employee is at the mercy of the supervisor and the organization (Broadwell, p. 19).” If the organization chooses structured OJT, the employee has a chance to learn the job right and be successful. If the organization overlooks the importance of OJT, employees are left to make mistakes and build bad habits and often make poor employees for the rest of their career. Employees learn bad habits if they are allowed to, and bad habits can lead to poor quality, performance gaps, working in an unsafe manner and more (Broadwell, 1995). In all fairness, employees shouldn't be held accountable for these habits if they weren't formally trained.

Failure to implement a structured OJT program also leads to skill shortages and deficiencies. This often results in such problems as loss of business, increased employee turnover, increased overtime work, increased pressure and stress on management, constraints on business development, increased recruitment and retention costs, and more.

On the other hand, a structured OJT program centers around what the learner needs to know and creates an environment that is more conducive to learning. Because of the structure, the learning curve is generally shorter, allowing workers to be productive much sooner.

Research shows that new employees spend at least 30% of their first three months in OJT (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1994). When OJT is structured, it often reduces this amount of time, as there is less need for retraining or correcting mistakes.

This structured learning period results in savings and benefits in a number of ways. Each business will find its own unique benefits upon implementation. Some of the widely-known and commonly cited benefits are greater job satisfaction among employees, increased productivity

and performance, decrease in waste, fewer accidents, lower absenteeism rates, lower labor turnover, better perception for company management, and an increase in customer/client satisfaction. The bottom line is that well-trained employees are more satisfied, more productive, and more likely to produce a high quality product that impresses customers.

Barriers to On-the-Job Training Programs

In spite of the many benefits of structured OJT, there are barriers that commonly prevent organizations from moving ahead with this type of program. Those most commonly cited include lack of awareness and lack of time (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1994).

If an organization's key stakeholders (management, union officials) do not recognize the difference between unstructured and structured OJT, they may continue to pair up new hires with existing employees to job shadow. In some cases, they may even believe in the "sink or swim" approach of putting the person directly into the job and letting them figure it out on their own. To counter this barrier, it is important to thoroughly define what structured OJT is (and what it isn't) along with the many benefits companies experience from this approach.

Others will cite lack of time as a reason to avoid structured OJT. In an era of common downsizing and running with lean workforces, OJT often takes a backseat to the day-to-day work demands. However, there is a high price to pay for not spending the time up front on effective training. If structured OJT is not in place, it will take longer for the new hire to be able to work effectively and efficiently on his/her own. The long-term cost of this far exceeds the short-term cost of taking the time up front. In addition, new hires "thrown into the job" without effective training may become frustrated and leave, perpetuating the cycle .

Summary

On-the-job training has evolved since its birth in the late 1800's, but its basic premise remains the same--there are inherent benefits to providing employees with the skills and knowledge to do their jobs to the best of their ability. The importance of such training has grown more recognized over the years, as companies place more emphasis on employee OJT. These training programs vary by organization. They may be organized and coordinated differently in each organization, but three elements of success are a structured curriculum, designated trainers, and ongoing support.

It is no secret that a well-trained workforce is an important element of any company's success. An effectively trained staff knows how to perform job tasks efficiently and safely, resulting in greater productivity, higher job satisfaction, decreased waste, fewer accidents, lower absenteeism, lower turnover, and more. A poorly trained staff, on the other hand, often results in communication problems, more hours and money spent accomplishing work tasks, and possibly loss of business. The benefits of OJT programs are critical in today's changing workforce.

To ensure a successful OJT program, companies should focus their attention on structured materials (such as manuals and checklists), careful selection and training of trainers, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and a support system that follows-up on training progress and continually stresses the importance of OJT.

Chapter III: Research Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this research study is to obtain feedback from associates about the on-the-job training (OJT) program at Company X and to make recommendations for improvement.

This chapter discusses the research methods used to complete this study, including subject selection, instrumentation, data analysis, and limitations.

There were several steps involved in the design of this study. First, the researcher identified components of successful OJT programs, as well as the intentions of Company X's program. Second, these components were used to design a survey and an introductory email to participants. Next, the researcher reviewed these documents with the human resource manager, production manager, and a training and development team advisor of Company X, to ensure they were aligned with company intentions, and to solicit any recommended changes. Based on their input, the researcher began data collection.

Subject Selection and Description

To best evaluate the OJT program at Company X, this study focused on the three categories of associates that would have the most thorough and useful feedback:

- Trainers- responsible for training new hires and transfers on the tasks of their jobs
- Trainees (past and present)- have been or are being trained in this OJT program
- Team Advisors- directly supervise trainer and trainees and monitor the progress of training

Because it would be difficult, given the round the clock operation at Company X, as well as vacations, to obtain feedback from all trainers, trainees, and team advisors, a sample size of 40% was set as a goal. This number was determined to be attainable and appropriate for collecting a wide variety of feedback about the OJT program. This sample size is outlined in Table 2:

Table 2: Sample Size

Category	Number of Associates in this category	40% goal sample size
Team Advisors	19	8
Trainers	40	16
Trainees (past or present)	59	24

Instrumentation

The research methodology used was a descriptive study to obtain feedback about the OJT program, its strengths, and areas for improvement. The researcher felt that the objectives would best be reached if the survey included both a likert scale and open-ended questions. The likert scale provides measurable data, while open-ended questions allow participants to share their thoughts and recommendations in more depth.

A fifteen question survey was developed from scratch. Questions were designed to determine how well Company X's OJT program compared to components of successful OJT programs and the initial objectives of the program. The survey included thirteen statements to be rated on a scale of one to four, with one being "strongly disagree" and four being "strongly agree." For each, the subject is encouraged to share responses beyond simply the rating, and the

survey provides room for capturing these additional comments. Following these thirteen likert scale questions are two open-ended questions:

- “Overall, what do you consider the strengths of our OJT program?”
- “What recommendations do you have for improvement?”

To maintain confidentiality, no names were attached to the survey documents. The only categorization of information classifies whether the subject is a trainer, trainee (past or present) or team advisor. This question is asked at the end of the survey.

Data Collection

Before the survey was conducted, the researcher sent an email to potential participants, notifying them of the survey and its purpose. This email stressed that responses would be kept confidential, and it included a consent statement to review. To ensure that participants had read this consent statement, the researcher asked all subjects at the beginning of their survey “Did you read the consent statement that was sent to you by mail?” If they had not, the researcher provided a copy. Following, the researcher asked, “Are you a voluntary participant in this study?” The survey would only commence with a verbal “yes” response.

The researcher met with associates on all shifts of Company X’s 24-hour a day, 7-day a week operation. Surveys were conducted in the employee’s work area to minimize disruption of work.

Using verbal surveys, the researcher met individually with subjects and verbally asked each question of the survey. This simplifies the process for the subject (ie: not needing to write responses down), and, therefore, encourages more thorough answers.

Although more time consuming than a paper-based survey, this method was also chosen with the expectation of a higher response rate. This is important because Company X, like many organizations, has received low response rates to paper surveys in the past.

Data Analysis

Because the survey contained both a likert scale and open-ended questions, data was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. All responses, both quantitative and qualitative, were broken down into four categories: responses from team advisors, responses from trainers, responses from trainees, and overall compiled results.

From a quantitative standpoint, the likert scale responses were tabulated and showed how many subjects selected each number, one through four, for every question asked. Averages were also determined for each of the thirteen rated survey questions.

With open-ended questions, the researcher was also able to examine the research qualitatively. Following Sharon Merriam's recommendations for qualitative research, the researcher organized the data into categories and identified common themes (Merriam, 2002). After identifying themes, the researcher explored to see whether these themes were only consistent from one group (such as team advisors) or whether the theme existed in all categories. The purpose of this qualitative data was to move beyond simply a numerical rating and focus more in-depth on the meaning people have construed from their experiences with Company X's OJT program.

Limitations

Limitations of this research methodology include:

- Because of a scheduled company shutdown for annual maintenance and installation of new equipment, the researcher had only a two week period to conduct surveys.
- The instrumentation had no documented measure of validity or reliability.
- Sample size was limited to 40% of trainers, trainees, and team advisors.

Chapter IV: Results of the Survey

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to obtain feedback from trainees (past and present), trainers, and team advisors about the on-the-job training (OJT) program at Company X and make recommendations for enhancing. The results of this study will be used as part of Company X's focus on continuous improvement, and the information is to be used as Company X expands structured OJT into other departments.

48 associates from Company X were randomly selected for this study, and their feedback was obtained using verbal surveys. This chapter outlines the responses to those surveys.

Sample Size

The goal of this research project was to collect feedback from 40% of trainees (past and present), trainers, and team advisors. The researcher was able to verbally survey 40% of team advisors and trainers. However, given the short timeframe for this project, and the fact the Company X was entering into a shutdown mode, the researcher was only able to contact 34%, or 20, of the trainees. Nevertheless, the researcher believes this sample size provided well-rounded feedback of OJT at Company X's OJT program.

Format of Responses

Participants were asked to respond to statements about the OJT program on the following rating scale:

1	2	3	4
Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree

In addition to the rating scale, participants were given the opportunity to share additional comments on any of the statements. To track where ratings and responses came from, while maintaining confidentiality, each participant was recorded as either a trainer, trainee (past or present), or Team Advisor, but no names were attached.

Research Question One

The first survey question asked participants to rate the statement “OJT is clearly a priority in our factory.” For OJT programs to be successful, they must be communicated as a priority in any facility. Responses to this statement showed a discrepancy. While a majority of team advisors strongly agreed with this statement, many trainers disagreed. This discrepancy reveals that the team advisors realize that OJT is a priority, but they may not be clearly communicating this to the trainers on their teams. Table 3 illustrates the results:

Table 3: OJT Priority

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Trainers	0%	56.25%	18.25%	25%
Trainees	0%	30%	20%	50%
Team Advisors	0%	11.11%	33.3%	55.6%
Additional	It's become more of a program than an ingrained process (Trainer)			

Comments	<p>It was a priority, but its losing its edge (Trainer)</p> <p>Some areas yes/ other areas no (Trainer)</p> <p>OJT has been voiced as a priority in this factory, but at times our actions have not shown that. The priority has often shifted to production. (Team Advisor)</p>
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Research Question Two

The second survey question asked participants to respond to the statement “Our OJT program includes set objectives to be accomplished.” All respondents consistently agreed with this statement. Table 4 illustrates the results:

Table 4: OJT Objectives

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Trainers	0%	0%	31.25%	68.75%
Trainees	0%	0%	50%	50%
Team Advisors	0%	0%	11.11%	88.89%
Additional Comments	<p>The checklists are great. (Trainer)</p> <p>Our manuals and checklists clearly state what needs to be learned during the training program. (Trainee)</p> <p>Considering the Target 2004 initiative, the objectives of OJT may evolve into something different. (Team Advisor)</p>			

Research Question Three

With the third survey question, participants were given the statement “Team Advisors consider both job knowledge and training abilities when choosing designated trainers.” In successful OJT programs, careful selection is made to determine who will train the new members of the team. The best trainer is both knowledgeable in the job and has the communication style and “people skills” to train effectively. Most participants agreed somewhat or strongly with this statement. A small percentage disagreed. This may reflect, as the comments show, that some team advisors are more selective than others. Table 5 illustrates the results:

Table 5: Selecting Trainers

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Trainers	12.5%	25%	18.75%	43.75%
Trainees	0%	15%	25%	60%
Team Advisors	0%	0%	33.33%	66.67%
Additional Comments	<p>Sometimes, team advisors select the best operator, which may not be the best trainer. (Trainer)</p> <p>Trainers are often chosen based on a matter of convenience. (Trainer)</p> <p>My team advisor did a nice job matching me with a trainer. (Trainee)</p> <p>My trainer is the newest person on our crew besides me. I think she was a bit nervous about being chosen, but she’s doing a good job. (Trainee)</p> <p>Sometimes, we are stuck, and we must select from the best resources available. (Team Advisor)</p>			

Research Question Four

The next survey question asked participants to rate the statement “Rollout meetings effectively set expectations and explain training materials.” Rollout meetings take place when Company X has a new hire or a transfer into the work area. The trainee, trainer, team advisor, and a training and development team advisor attend these meetings to discuss the OJT process, explain the materials, and answer any questions. Most respondents somewhat or strongly agreed with this question. Table 6 illustrates the results:

Table 6: Rollout Meetings

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Trainers	0%	0%	37.5%	62.5%
Trainees	0%	10%	60%	30%
Team Advisors	0%	11.11%	22.22%	66.67%
Additional Comments	I was overwhelmed the day of my rollout meeting, and I had a lot of information thrown at me. I'm not sure I remembered much from that meeting. (Trainee)			

Research Question Five

The fifth survey question asked respondents to rate the statement “The roles of the trainee, trainer, and team advisor are clearly understood.” While all team advisors agreed with this statement, some trainees and trainers disagreed. As with earlier questions, this shows that

team advisors are clear about the roles, but there appears to be room for improved communication to trainers and trainees. Table 7 illustrates the results:

Table 7: Roles

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Trainers	0%	25%	43.75%	31.25%
Trainees	0%	25%	25%	50%
Team Advisors	0%	0%	22.22%	77.78%
Additional Comments	Sometimes the roles get lost. There's room for more clarification (Trainer)			

Research Question Six

The sixth survey question asked participants to respond to “Trainers and Trainees are allowed the time and flexibility to accomplish what needs to be learned.” This question revealed the biggest discrepancy of the survey. All team advisors agreed that time and flexibility existed, but the majority of trainers and trainees disagreed. The comments reflect frustration in not having enough time to devote to thorough training. Trainees are often moved to help out in other work areas, even before their training is complete. And, as the comments show, training takes a backseat to production when the demand is there. Table 8 illustrates the results:

Table 8: Time and Flexibility

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree

Trainers	43.75%	43.75%	12.5%	0%
Trainees	15%	60%	25%	0%
Team Advisors	0%	0%	88.89%	11.11%
Additional Comments	<p>A person I was training got farmed out to do other things and work in other areas where they needed an extra person. I believe the trainees should stay with their crew and focus on training. (Trainer)</p> <p>This is my biggest pet peeve in our OJT program. We are rushed to get people through the training because of vacation coverage and such. (Trainer)</p> <p>Production is given much higher priority than training. It is a natural conflict, but we need to find a better balance. (Trainer)</p> <p>We need to remove the trainer and trainee from the production demands so they can focus on learning. (Trainer)</p> <p>Trying to do too many jobs at once—we need to have an extra person on staff to help cover during training times. (Trainer)</p> <p>The training is too fast-paced. (Trainee)</p> <p>We are often pulled in too many directions, which is confusing on the processing part. (Trainee)</p> <p>Time is precious—we can't always give the time because of our production environment. (Team Advisor)</p> <p>In some instances, yes, we can allow the time. In others, though, it is more difficult. (Team Advisor)</p>			

Research Question Seven

The seventh survey question asked respondents to rate the statement “Our training manuals are thorough and accurate.” While a few trainers somewhat disagreed, overall the response to this question was positive. Since each work area has its own OJT manual, this may reflect, as noted in the comments, that some are more accurate than others, due to continuous changes in the work environment. Table 9 illustrates the results:

Table 9: Thorough and Accurate Manuals

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Trainers	0%	25%	50%	25%
Trainees	0%	0%	65%	35%
Team Advisors	0%	0%	33.33%	66.67%
Additional Comments	<p>I appreciate that operator input was used to create these manuals. (Trainer)</p> <p>We’ve come a long way with the manuals over time. However, people have lost some enthusiasm for the program, so when they are up for review, they aren’t as closely looked at as they could be. (Trainer)</p> <p>The biggest challenge is keeping up with them, since things change so fast. There’s bound to be something that’s outdated in them. (Trainer)</p> <p>Some could use more clarity, varies by area. (Trainer)</p> <p>My manual has been a good learning tool. (Trainee)</p> <p>Our biggest hurdle is keeping the books up to date with so many changes in the factory. (Team Advisor)</p>			

Research Question Eight

The eighth survey question asked participants to rate the statement “Our training manuals are useful.” All respondents consistently agreed with this statement, and comments reflect how helpful these tools are. Table 10 illustrates the results:

Table 10: Useful Manuals

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Trainers	0%	0%	37.5%	62.5%
Trainees	0%	0%	60%	40%
Team Advisors	0%	0%	11.11%	88.89%
Additional Comments	<p>I see trainees carry these around as their bibles during training. (Trainer)</p> <p>These are good reference books to come back to. (Trainee)</p> <p>I recommend that we use the job outline section better during training. Too often trainees are asked to sit down and read all their SOPs before they even get to the floor. (Trainer)</p> <p>Some of the employees that have been here a long time think these manuals are stupid, but I disagree. They were very helpful for me. (Trainee)</p> <p>The manuals are great. I'd like more instructions on how to use mine while balancing my workload. (Trainee)</p>			

Research Question Nine

Participants were next asked to respond to “The performance checklists are an effective tool for documenting training.” While the majority agreed, there was some disagreement from trainers and trainees. The comments show that more emphasis should be placed on the importance of these checklists. Too often, they are not filled out timely, due to other priorities.

Table 11 illustrates the results:

Table 11: Performance Checklists

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Trainers	0%	18.75%	18.75%	62.5%
Trainees	0%	15%	50%	35%
Team Advisors	0%	0%	22.22%	77.75%
Additional Comments	<p>This may be a good time to look at the tasks on the performance checklists and consider updating them. (Trainer)</p> <p>The checklists are an effective tool, but the trainer and trainee need to make it a priority to do these everyday. Sometimes, they get overlooked with all our other paperwork. (Trainee)</p> <p>They are a great tool, but the team advisor needs to communicate that filling these out is a priority, or it won't get done timely. (Trainee)</p> <p>We started out really good, filling my checklist out on a daily basis. But, as we got further into my training and focusing on more things, we tended to forget to document on a daily basis. (Trainee)</p>			

Research Question Ten

The tenth survey question asked participants to respond to “Team Advisors provide adequate support and follow-up during OJT.” Most participants responded favorably, but there were a few that disagreed with the statement. It is important to note that responses may vary because team advisor support varies in each work area. Table 12 illustrates the results:

Table 12: Team Advisor Support

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Trainers	25%	25%	31.25%	37.25%
Trainees	0%	20%	20%	40%
Team Advisors	0%	0%	77.78%	22.22%
Additional Comments	<p>It could be better. (Trainer)</p> <p>Maybe they want to, but they are restricted by time and priorities. (Trainer)</p> <p>I would like to see my Team Advisor ask more questions about the training progress. (Trainer)</p> <p>My Team Advisor always checks in. (Trainer) My Team Advisor does a great job of following up. (Trainer)</p> <p>My Team Advisor is out here every night asking how things are going. (Trainee)</p> <p>We could always do more. (Team Advisor)</p> <p>Issue with timing in the production environment- we manage the best we can. (Team Advisor)</p> <p>As we become a more flat organization – there is less time</p>			

	<p>for us to do these follow-ups. (Team Advisor)</p> <p>I know that the team advisors fully support OJT process. However, with everything that comes down to the Team Advisor at any given time, I'm not sure that adequate time, priority, and emphasis is given. There are many other initiatives and responsibilities that fall into the lap of the team advisor (trials, etc.) in addition to daily quality and production needs. It is rare that someone asks us if we need more time for OJT follow up versus ODIR investigations, batch file review turnaround, associate PEPs, SOP compliance, audits, etc. (Team Advisor)</p>
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Research Question Eleven

The eleventh survey question asked respondents to rate the statement "The training department provides adequate support and follow-up during OJT." As with question ten, most participants responded favorably, but there were a few who somewhat disagreed, particularly in the team advisor category. Comments reflect a desire to have the training department spend more time on the floor. Table 13 illustrates the results:

Table 13: Training Department Support

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Trainers	0%	12.5%	62.5%	25%
Trainees	0%	0%	70%	30%
Team Advisors	0%	33.3%	55.56%	11.11%
Additional Comments	<p>The follow up goes well overall. (Trainer)</p> <p>Training Department could call to check in on us on a weekly basis. (Trainer)</p>			

	<p>It might be nice to see the training department come out more often, but be careful not to be too intrusive. Its about finding the right balance. (Trainer)</p> <p>Its good that the training department checks progress and asks if there are any concerns that need help. (Trainer)</p> <p>I feel I've gotten plenty of support and my questions are answered. (Trainee)</p> <p>An adequate amount would be three times over each employee's first 90 days. (Team Advisor)</p>
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Research Question Twelve

The next questions asked participants were asked to respond to “Our OJT program provides consistency in training.” One of Company X’s main objectives in developing this program was to ensure that people received the same training, regardless of the shift they are on. Responses show that, while the materials provide for consistency, different training styles make it difficult to ensure that training is always the same. Table 14 illustrates the results:

Table 14: OJT Consistency

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Trainers	0%	56.25%	43.75%	25%
Trainees	0%	35%	40%	25%
Team Advisors	0%	22.22%	44.44%	33.33%
Additional Comments	It is designed to provide consistency, but a lot stems from the trainer's abilities and personality. (Trainer)			

Comments	<p>Training style and ability vary. Sometimes, the trainee and trainer are not a good match, which can affect training results. (Trainer)</p> <p>At times, trainees are bounced around from area to area and this created inconsistency. (Trainer)</p> <p>It is consistent in terms of structure and information. (Team Advisor)</p> <p>There are some variables. Person-to-person depends on the knowledge of the trainer.</p> <p>Since the implementation of OJT here, our training has become more consistent and clearly defined. (Team Advisor)</p> <p>Overall, we have a good program and we need to stick to it. (Team Advisor)</p>
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Research Question Thirteen

The last rating scale question asked participants to respond to “Company X provides trainers with the tools and knowledge needed to effectively train others.” Responses were split, ranging from strong agreement to strong disagreement. Interestingly, no trainers strongly agreed with this statement, showing an opportunity for more train-the-trainer knowledge and tools.

Table 15 illustrates the results:

Table 15: Trainer Tools and Knowledge

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Trainers	12.5%	25%	62.5%	0%

Trainees	10%	15%	50%	25%
Team Advisors	0%	44.4%	22.22%	33.33%
Additional Comments	<p>The tools are there, but we need the time to effectively use those tools. (Trainer)</p> <p>Tools are there, but our knowledge could be better. (Trainer)</p> <p>Train the Trainer is a great program. Beyond that, more tools and mini courses for trainers would be helpful- on effective communication, giving feedback, etc. (Trainer)</p> <p>I'd like to see one person per shift be the designated trainer, with an incentive for doing so. (Trainer)</p> <p>Tools were always provided as needed and the training department checked in to see if I had questions. (Trainer)</p> <p>People either have the desire to be trainers and help others or they don't. (Trainer)</p> <p>This is good for those who want to develop their skills more. (Trainer)</p> <p>You can do more with shorter sessions, perhaps 1.5 hours on a quarterly basis to continually develop trainer skills. (Team Advisor)</p> <p>Another hurdle we encounter is lack of training, in my opinion, for the trainers. (Team Advisors)</p>			

Research Question Fourteen

Participants were asked two open ended questions to close the survey, the first being “What do you consider the strengths of our OJT program?” The most cited strengths included manuals, checklists, structure, and organization. Table 16 includes the responses:

Table 16: Overall Strengths

Trainer Responses	<p>Manuals and checklists (four respondents)</p> <p>The manuals (three respondents)</p> <p>The structure (three respondents)</p> <p>It’s an organized process (two respondents)</p> <p>Helps employees clearly understand what they need to learn</p> <p>It gives operators, that want to, a chance to train others; a good growth opportunity. By training, you learn more yourself.</p> <p>The progress checks</p> <p>Rollout meetings- they set the tone and the expectations</p>
Trainee Responses	<p>The manual (eight responses)</p> <p>The structure of the program (four responses)</p> <p>The trainers (two responses)</p> <p>Everything was thoroughly explained to me</p> <p>It thoroughly conveys company requirements</p> <p>Following up on the program- process checks</p> <p>It gives people a chance to get better at training</p>

	Consistency- people are trained the same way The reassurance that everything I need to know is listed on my checklist and in my manual
Team Advisor Responses	Uniformity/ consistency (two responses) Structure (two responses) Training materials (two responses) Starting and ending processes Rollout sessions Manuals serves as a good tool to reference where to look for additional information needed and training Our on-the-floor trainers are the biggest strength of the program The people available to do the training

Research Question Fifteen

The final survey question asked participants for their recommendations to improve the program. Responses reflected those from earlier questions, including time to train and keeping people on one crew during training. Table 17 includes the responses:

Table 17: Overall Recommendations

Trainer Responses	Give trainers and trainees the time to train (six responses) Keep people with their crew and in one job during training (five responses) Allow us to train more slowly (four responses)
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	<p>Don't have people read lots of SOPs right away. (two responses)</p> <p>Have one designated trainer per crew.</p> <p>Give employee training basics before they come to the floor, such as DIS and forklift. This saves a lot of time and makes training easier.</p> <p>More follow-up by team advisors.</p> <p>Consider written tests in addition to hands-on training.</p> <p>Do not make the assumption that someone is trained because they are done with their 90 days.</p> <p>Allow time to apply learning slowly. You can read a book on anatomy, but that doesn't mean I want you to operate on my brain! Need hands-on practice time.</p> <p>Would like to see more continuous training for existing employees—SAP, team meetings, continuous improvement.</p> <p>We need more energy around OJT to make it an ingrained process. We had lots of energy at first, but some has been lost.</p> <p>Provide additional ongoing tools for trainers, beyond the initial train-the-trainer.</p> <p>Keep updating the process. I know we do an annual revision for each manual, but maybe it should be more than annually. And, at that point, maybe we should brainstorm ways to enhance the entire OJT program versus simply updating the books.</p>
Trainee Responses	<p>Do not pull people away from their work area to help in other areas during training (five responses)</p> <p>Allow more time for training (four responses)</p> <p>Forced overtime is a big issue for new hires. I was forced to</p>

	<p>do overtime and help out in areas that I hadn't been trained in yet. When I came back, it set me back in my normal work area. Its too confusing to try to learn different areas at the same time. When I was hired, I was under the impression that there'd be no forced overtime during my training period, but there's been a lot of it. And, when I'm here on overtime, I'm not with a trainer.</p> <p>Vacation relief training can be frustrating. In three months, I've worked in four areas. I feel that I don't know a lot about any of them. I'd like to train in one area until comfortable, and then move on to another.</p> <p>Train people on the shift they are hired for. Don't expect them to come in on off-shifts to get trained. If the company values family, then we should practice what we preach.</p> <p>More follow-up from team advisors.</p> <p>It'd be nice if the OJT manual and the SOP books were all in one.</p>
<p>Team Advisor Responses</p>	<p>More follow up by the training department.</p> <p>More involvement from training department directly with the operators who are in OJT</p> <p>See training department work on the night shift once a month (or start with that and gauge). Interact with the team advisors and trainers, advise, give direction and feedback, offer training, and make it known that you're available all night.</p> <p>Feedback from the training group to the trainer, trainee, and team advisor as to the quality of documentation within the training material (ie: comments, neatness, etc.)</p> <p>Provide further training to trainers to enable them to shift their training styles to different learning styles of the trainee.</p> <p>Following up with the operators is somewhat difficult at time, as the new hires work a variety of shifts starting out. Keep new hires with the same trainer and the same shift as</p>

	<p>long as possible and back off on forced overtime until most training components are complete.</p> <p>No recommendations for changes.</p>
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Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

There are many benefits to providing employees with the skills and knowledge they need to effectively perform their jobs, including greater productivity, higher job satisfaction, decreased waste, fewer accidents, lower absenteeism, and more. Company X recognized these benefits when it instituted a structured OJT program for production and material control associates in 2001.

Three years later, with a focus on continuous improvement, and while rolling out OJT to other job positions, Company X decided to evaluate its current program. This research study obtained feedback from associates at Company X about their OJT program, to identify strengths and areas for improvement. This chapter summarizes those findings and makes recommendations for Company X's training program as they move forward.

Methods and Procedures

After a thorough review of literature on the subject of on-the-job training, the researcher identified components of successful OJT programs: structured materials, thorough selection and training of trainers, clearly defined roles, and a strong support system for OJT.

A verbal survey was conducted with trainers, trainees (past and present), and team advisors at Company X to obtain their feedback on how Company X is performing in these components of OJT.

Structured Materials

Structured materials are clearly one of Company X's strengths when it comes to OJT. Participants agreed that the program has set objectives, that the training manuals are useful and, for the most part, thorough and accurate. Performance checklists, which are used to document the training, are an effective tool. These checklists allow the trainer, trainee, and team advisor to keep track of what has been accomplished and what remains to be learned. With this documentation, trainers and trainees are ensured that no tasks are overlooked in the training. As comments suggested, trainers and trainees need to make it a priority to fill these out on a daily basis. With other priorities and paperwork to complete, the performance checklists are sometimes overlooked.

This structured system provides a great deal of consistency, which was one of Company X's goals when they started the program. Training still varies somewhat from trainer to trainer, in terms of delivery style, but the structured objectives, manuals, and performance checklists ensure that all trainees are receiving the same content and learning to perform the same tasks according to Standard Operating Procedures.

Selection and Training of Trainers

The research indicates that most team advisors consider both job knowledge and training ability when selecting trainers, with a few exceptions. This may partly stem from, as one team advisor commented, a lack of resources and needing to select from the best associates available on a given crew.

In terms of training the trainers, this is certainly room for growth. Trainers are provided with an initial train-the-trainer, but, as the results show, this may not be enough. Ongoing training for trainers, perhaps in short sessions (1 ½ - 2 hours) on a quarterly basis, will allow them to refine their skills, have their questions answered, and continually grow in effectiveness.

Clearly Defined Roles

When asked whether the roles of the trainer, trainee, and team advisor are clearly understood, there was a bit of a discrepancy in responses. Team Advisors felt that these roles were clear, but trainers and trainees were less sure. Rollout meetings, which were responded to favorably in this research, are held at the beginning of each associate's training period. Attended by a training and development team advisor, the associate's team advisor, the trainee, and the trainer, these meetings explain the materials and the training process, and they set forth the roles and expectations.

One way to strengthen the understanding of the roles is to place stronger emphasis on them in the rollout meeting. In addition, continuous follow-up during training, by the team advisor and the training department, will allow for questions to be answered and roles to be further clarified.

Support System

Company X's OJT program includes a support system, with both team advisors and the training department following up regularly to check progress and answer questions.

Nevertheless, this research study identified areas for improvement when it comes to the support system.

When asked if OJT was clearly a priority, most team advisors agreed, but the majority of trainers did not. (Trainees were split between agreeing and disagreeing with this statement.) This means that, while team advisors clearly recognize OJT as a priority, it is not always the message the trainers are receiving. Many survey comments identified a lack of time and movement of trainees (to other work areas) during their training period as the main problems with Company X's training program.

Many trainers and trainees expressed concern that trainees are frequently pulled from training to help in other areas or to cover for vacation needs. While doing this may solve a short-term need for coverage, it often confuses the trainee and sets the training back, which could ultimately mean a longer overall training period. This is especially frustrating for vacation relief

operators, who are trained to cover vacations in a number of areas of the facility. By moving around, before being fully comfortable in one area, the associate is left feeling frustrated.

Another trainee expressed concern over being forced to come in and work overtime, without a trainer. During overtime, the associate was asked to work in areas (s)he was not trained in yet, which was confusing and set the individual back when (s)he returned to training on the regular work tasks. Even a team advisor recognized this issue and commented that trainees should be kept on their own shift as long as possible, while backing off on forced overtime.

Most participants responded favorably when asked if team advisors provide enough support and follow-up. Team advisors recognized there could be even better follow-up, but their time is often tied up with other priorities in the production environment.

Many respondents agreed that the training department also provides adequate support and follow-up. Comments suggested, however, that more time on the floor would be helpful, particularly on the night shift.

Recommendations

Based on the review of literature, identifying components of successful OJT, and based on the results of the survey at Company X, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

- Place more emphasis on getting performance checklists completed on a daily basis. This expectation should be clearly set in rollout meetings, and frequent follow-up by team advisors and the training department will serve as a reminder.
- Institute ongoing training for the trainers, with mini-sessions held on a quarterly basis. To ensure that these sessions meet the needs of the trainers, conduct a survey to determine where their gaps are, what struggles they encounter, and what areas they'd like to learn more about.
- Spend more time clarifying the roles and responsibilities of trainers, trainees, and team advisors in the rollout meetings. Further clarify any confusion through frequent follow-ups by the team advisor and the training department.
- Increase the training department's time on the floor to include more night shifts. This presence will send a message about the priority of OJT and it will allow the night shift trainers and trainees more interaction with the training department.
- Work with production management to solve the issues around lack of time and movement of trainees. This was clearly the largest frustration voiced in the comments of the survey. Look for alternative ways and/or institute policies to cover short-term needs, so that trainers and trainees can focus their time and attention on training.

Summary

So much of any organization's success stems from the skills and abilities of its people. Structured on-the-job training programs provide associates with the skills and knowledge they need. Well-trained associates are more satisfied, more productive, and more likely to produce high-quality business results.

Company X has made great strides with its OJT program, including all of the essential components: structured materials, designated trainers, defined roles and responsibilities, and a support system. With all of these elements in place, they are in a position for an even stronger program, based on the recommendations that this research identified. The feedback collected from their trainees, trainers, and team advisors will prove invaluable as Company X moves ahead in its focus on continuous improvement.

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Appendix A: Introductory Email

Dear Company X Associate:

I am conducting a research project regarding the on-the-job training program at Company X as part of my master's thesis at UW-Stout. This study is also being done to provide feedback to Company X about the OJT program, so the organization can continually improve the program.

As part of this study, I will be verbally surveying a sampling of team advisors, trainers, and (past or present) trainees regarding the effectiveness of the OJT program, including strengths and areas for improvement. You have been randomly selected to participate in this study.

I look forward to visiting you in your work area in the next week to ask you some brief questions about the OJT program. Your feedback will be kept confidential (no names will be attached to any responses). I greatly appreciate your participation, which will take approximately 10 minutes of your time.

Please read the following consent statement:

I understand that by participating in this brief interview, I am giving my informed consent as a volunteer in this study. I understand the basic nature of this study and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. I also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from successful completion of this study. I am aware that information is being sought in a specific manner and that no identifiers are needed and that confidentiality is guaranteed. I realize I

have the right to refuse to participate and that my right to withdraw from participation at any time will be respected with no coercion or prejudice.

Questions or concerns about participation in this research or subsequent complaints should be directed to the researcher, Kristy Martin at Company X extension 2850 or David Johnson, Research Advisor, at 715-232-2143. Questions about the rights of research subjects can be addressed to Sue Foxwell, Human Protections Administrator, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 Harvey Hall, Menomonie WI 54751, phone 715-232-1126.

Appendix B: Survey

Evaluation of the OJT Program at Company X

Researcher's Opening Comments at the Start of Each Survey:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me! I will be asking you fifteen questions to get your input about the OJT program at Company X. Your responses will be kept confidential. Answers from all participants will be compiled into one document, and the only breakdown will be whether each response came from a team advisor, a trainer, or someone who is/has been a trainee. Did you read the consent statement that was sent to you by email? *If no, the researcher will provide a copy for the participant to read.* Are you a voluntary participant in this study?

Instructions- Researcher will Read to the Participant:

On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 4 being "strongly agree," please respond to the statements I will read to you. For each of these, I encourage you to share your thoughts beyond simply the rating.

OJT Process and Components

1. OJT is clearly a priority in our factory.	1	2	3	4
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Comments:

8. 2. Our OJT program includes set objectives to be accomplished.	1	2	3	4
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Comments:

3. Team Advisors consider both job knowledge and training abilities when choosing designated trainers.	1	2	3	4
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Comments:

4. Rollout meetings effectively set expectations and explain training materials.	1	2	3	4
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Comments:

5. The roles of the trainee, trainer, and team advisor are clearly understood.	1	2	3	4
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Comments:

6. Trainers and trainees are allowed the time and flexibility to accomplish what needs to be learned.	1	2	3	4
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Comments:

7. Our training manuals are thorough and accurate.	1	2	3	4
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Comments:

8. Our training manuals are useful.	1	2	3	4
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Comments:

9. The performance checklists are an effective tool for documenting training.	1	2	3	4
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Comments:

10. Team Advisors provide adequate support and follow-up during OJT.	1	2	3	4
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Comments:

11. The Training and Development department provides adequate support and follow-up during OJT.	1	2	3	4
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Comments:

Program Intentions

12. Our OJT program provides consistency in training (person to person, shift to shift)	1	2	3	4
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Comments:

13. Company X provides trainers with the tools and knowledge needed to effectively train others.	1	2	3	4
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Comments:

14. Overall, what do you consider the strengths of our OJT program?

15. What recommendations do you have for improvement?

Your role in our OJT program is:

___ Trainer

___ Trainee (either past or present)

___ Team Advisor

Researcher's Closing Comments:

Thank you for your participation in this study! Your comments will help us continue to enhance the OJT program at Company X.