

Training – A Strategic HRM Function

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ABSTRACT

People are the most important and valuable resources every organization has in the form of its employees. There is a realization that people sub system is a critical dimension in organizational effectiveness. Training is an important and integral part of HRD and is crucial to organizational effectiveness. Many organizations appreciate the value of adequate, consistent and long term investment in such functions. Training helps employees to prepare for change to face the challenges. Training helps individual to acquire competencies necessary to achieve organizational objectives. Every organization wants to prosper and grows. New materials, new products, new systems and techniques and above all new and constantly increasing customer expectations means that people have to learn. Training improves the capability of an organization. So training plays an important role in the effectiveness of people at work. Training has implication for productivity, health and safety at work and personal development.

Keywords: Training; Training Need Identification; Self actualization; Training Evaluation and Competencies

1. INTRODUCTION

During the last few years the scope and application of training has been considerably widened. Training is a key tool for enhancing job related performance and organizational effectiveness.

Every organization is influenced by internal and external environmental factors. Internal environment influences in terms of strategies, goals, organization culture, and nature of the task, work group, leadership styles and experience. External environmental influences in terms of government policies, economic conditions, competitiveness, composition of labour force and location of the organization. Organizations can predict the behavior of internal factors influencing but do not have control over the external factors. External environment create challenge of change to HR professionals to survive in competitive environment. Training is an important and integral part of HRD and is crucial to organizational effectiveness. Many organizations appreciate the value of adequate, consistent and long term investment in such functions. Training helps employees to prepare for change to face the challenges. Training helps individual to acquire competencies necessary to achieve organizational objectives.

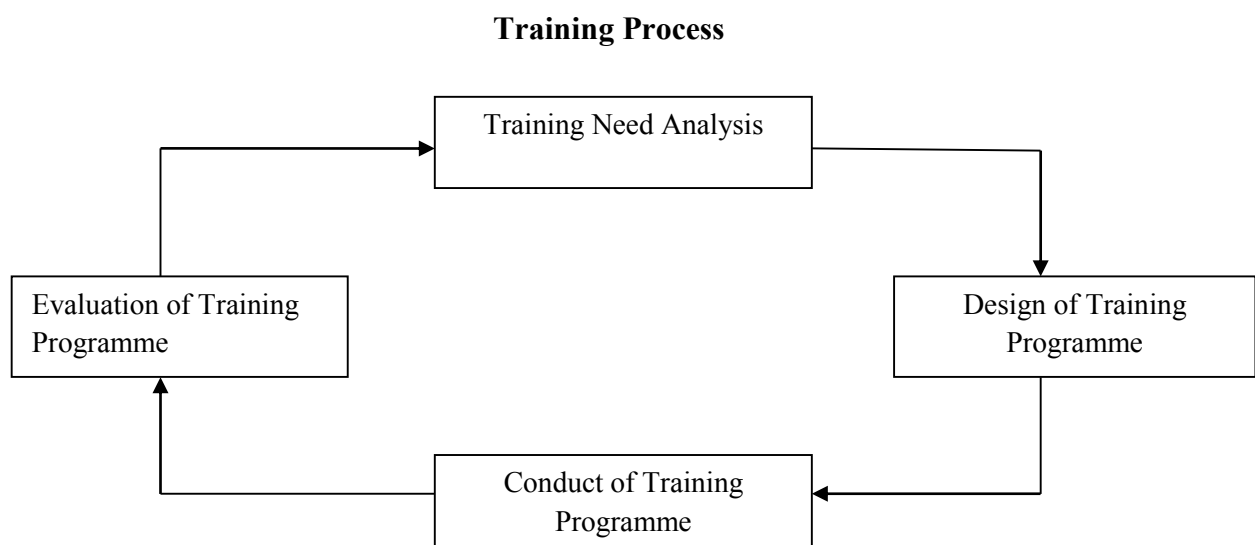
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2. IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING

Training is best seen as an incentive to commitment, team effort, customer relations etc. In 1966 Bass and Vaughan argued that a Maslow type of 'self actualization' with its self fulfillment and personal growth through work could come through training. The individual benefits emphasize the growth in human capacities through the effective use of skills and abilities at work which in turn would give greater social relevance to the nature of the job. Training is a form of

Performance management. The result of training is more efficient use of resources from plant to machinery, less waste and scrap, higher performance levels, better quality goods/services, the maintenance of sound customer and industrial relation and ultimately more profitability. Other benefits to an organization from training are: Learning times are reduced, retention of employees may be enhanced, the incidence of absence and accidents may drop, job flexibility can increase, attitudes towards the ethos of the organization can be altered, develop in-house specialized skills.



2. 1. Training Process

The effectiveness of the training heavily dependent upon effectiveness of process used to identifying training needs. Most organizations formalize training process by providing a budget and resources for training but this will not ensure the investment is a good one. To ensure the best possible returns for the organization, training and development activities like any investment have to be targeted, planned and managed. First and foremost, the training and development required for the organization to achieve its objectives must be properly identified and prioritized. This is the objective of training need analysis in an organization.

Experience and the survey results of 200 organizations in 2003 survey results reveal that organization regardless of the nature of the industry and size of their company, which place a high premium on training, will always ensure that the important components of the training process are given attention.

Training need analysis is the first step on the path to effective training. Training need analysis means measuring the gap between skills available and skills required for employees and making recommendations to bridge the gap. When need analysis is done, it is possible to focus attention on the target and identify the means for getting there. The Need analysis process also involves others and helps them to understand the issues which are facing.

There are five essential reasons for doing need analysis: The business world is changing rapidly and organizations require keeping pace with this change, as result everyone is being asked to stretch to do more the ever and to do it faster, to ensure solution addresses the issue, to effectively focus resources, time and effort toward a targeted training solution and to eliminate the necessity of having to look for another job.

2. 2. Sources of Training Needs

To carry out training needs for organization requires need information that can be evaluated against the factors. Sources of training need are requiring that relate needs to business. The information must relate to the level at which analysis is to be done: organization, occupation or employees. Suitable source for training need analysis is mission and values, business plan, succession plan, competency framework, views and observations about 'how we do things', performance appraisal records, evidence of competence for individuals, development opportunities, action points that highlight needs questionnaires, job descriptions, performance targets, observation of employee at work, interviews with managers, staff, subordinates, internal and external customers.

2. 3. Process of Training Need Analysis

2. 3. 1. Assessment of present situation

In Training need analysis, assessment of present situation helps in defining the problem. All the other action in TNA depends on making this assessment accurately. To get complete picture of present situation three questions are involved: where organization stands now: start by noting what already known about situation. Try to involve others right from the beginning so partnership will be established for the process.

2. 3. 2. Why we require training

We require training to address the situation. What are the issues, problems or situation that are creating the need or demand for training in an organization? Never try to answer this question without getting ideas from others. What organization issues results in to need for training: The mission, vision and business objectives of organization helpful in this regard.

2. 3. 3. Envisioning Future

This aspect provides what will be the situation of individual, group and organization after the training has been accomplished. The vision of the organization is very important in this regard because it provides answer of three questions: (a) where organization wants to be? (b) What would success look like? (c) Does an organization have a complete picture?

2. 3. 4. Gathering information

Assessment of present situation and Envisioning the future helps in establishing good platform for training need analysis. Organization is in position to take steady aim at the target. Collection of information helps in defining what are aiming at and better understanding of what needs to be done to reach future state.

2. 3. 5. Sorting information

After collection of information require to interpret the information to find out what it really tells about current situation and challenges faced in moving to future state. When organization finishes this step organization will have document identifying major training issues to be addressed and recommendations for addressing them.

2. 3. 6. Sharing results

Sharing the results with others and developing the recommendations for action can be a heady experience. In this stage of need analysis organization will see the result of strategy. The momentum which is created by the results carries organization for action planning.

2. 3. 7. Action plan

The last action in the need analysis process is to translate the recommendations in to plan of action. List of activities will be used in the mapping the training approach. In this step we are simply creating a description of the specific training required to improve the situation. The action plan assures that organization will keep moving forward. It assigns responsibility for the training to specific individuals and gives them a timeline for completing the identified actions.

2. 4. Aim & training objectives

After identifying the training needs we need to formulate the aim of training and set training objectives. Aim links training design to the training needs. Aims are of little value in designing the actual training, because they do not give sufficient information about what the learners will learn during their training and even further, what they will be able to do on completion. This requires formulation of objectives. An objective is used to state what learners will be able to do on completion of training, when they have achieved a satisfactory standard of performance under training conditions. The term used to describe this is called Training objective.

2. 5. Design and development of Training

Designing training programme is an important component of systematic approach to training. The quality of any training effort is based largely on it is thought through and planned before any action is taken. Designing training is like making out a road trip or crating a journey. A training design is basically an outline of all the what, where, who, when and how details of the training for use by coordinators, curriculum developers and trainers.

After assessing the training needs of the participants the trainer is now in a position to start planning for the training programme. The trainer must know that it is not enough simply to list the topics one tends to cover in the training programme. A training programme is constructed in terms of the achievement of objectives. The critical question is not what topics to cover but what trainer wants the participants to value, understand or do with the topics.

Designing of training examines how the training should be planned so that it will meet identified training needs. It shifts the focus from investigating the problem (which is the key issue in the analysis) to investigating and scoping the solution. The goal of training design is to determine what training experience will meet training needs and thereby close performance gaps between what people can do and what they must do to meet the performance requirements.

There are five primary components of a training design are learning outcome, training material, trainers and content experts, training methods and logistics (Title, rationale of the training, objectives of the training, course outline, learning methodology, time frames, dates and venue, evaluation method, resource speakers/persons and training cost).

If the design phase of training is like creating blueprint for a house the development phase is the actual hammer and nails construction. Training agency must take right materials and build solid structure of training. Developing training involves writing materials, creating learning exercise and working with content experts and trainers. During the progression of development phase make sure the training materials and exercises match the learning outcomes identified in the design phase, which are based on training need assessment.

2. 6. Delivery of Training

Delivery of training is real challenge. Competencies, patience and confidence of the training agency is tested during this phase. Delivery of the programme is process that actually begins with the arrival of the participants for the programme. The delivery phase of training is when the coordination, assessment of learning needs, design, and development phases come together. Successful training delivery depends on:

- Accurate identification of participants' training needs
- A carefully crafted training plan
- Well-managed training details
- Thorough and relevant materials
- Prepared trainers, ready to present a compelling learning experience

While the other steps of the training process focus heavily on creating the content of the training, the delivery or implementation phase is concerned with teaching the content and participant learning. Now that you have built your house, you want to invite people in to experience what you have created.

2. 7. Evaluation of Training

The last phase of the training process requires the assessment of the conduct of the training activity. When organization has invested in some training, how do we know if it has a success? Our gut feeling might be that skills and practice have improved. But in what ways and by how much has it improved, and did organization get value of money? Answer of these questions can be given by doing evaluation.

The evaluation of training forms the remaining part of the training cycle which starts with the identification of training needs, establishing objectives and continues through to the design and delivery of the training course itself.

It is the function of evaluation to assess whether the learning objectives originally identified have been satisfied and any deficiency rectified. Evaluation is the analysis and comparison of actual progress versus prior plans, oriented toward improving plans for future implementation. It is part of a continuing management process consisting of planning, implementation and evaluation; ideally with each following the other in a continuous cycle

until successful completion of the activity. Evaluation process must start before training has begun and continue throughout the whole learning process.

Training cost can be significant in any business. Most organizations are prepared to incur these cost because they expect that their business to benefit from employees development and progress. Whether business has benefited can be assessed by evaluation of training. There are basically four parties involved in evaluating the result of any training. Trainer, Trainee, Training and Development department and Line Manager.

- The Trainee wants to confirm that the course has met personal expectations and satisfied any learning objectives set by the T & D department at the beginning of the programme.
- The Trainer concern is to ensure that the training that has been provided is effective or not.
- Training and Development want to know whether the course has made the best use of the resources available.
- The Line manager will be seeking reassurance that the time hat trainee has spent in attending training results in to value and how deficiency in knowledge and skill redressed.

The problem for many organizations is not so much why training should be evaluated but how. Most of the organizations overlook evaluation because financial benefits are difficult to describe in concrete terms.

Donald Kirkpatrick developed four level models to assess training effectiveness. According to him evaluation always begins with level first and should move through other levels in sequence. These levels are Reaction, Learning, Behavior and Result. Another model for evaluation of training need is developed by Professor Virmani Pre-training, Context and Input evaluation and Post-training evaluation.

Donald Kirkpatrick provided a framework of four levels of evaluation and Professor Virmani provided a framework of three levels of evaluation. Jack Phillips has written that evaluation must go beyond level IV and focus on real measurement of ROI. ROI will measure training success at completing its business tasks. Common Areas for Evaluation in Training are: Curriculum based on TNA, Content, Time allotment, Activity requirements, Training methods, Trainer/resource persons, Training management group, Logistics, Facilities, Food and Accommodation.

3. CONCLUSION

In the era of liberalization, privatization and globalization every organization is operating in highly dynamic environment. Today, most organizations consider enhancing performance of people, preparing for change, designing and implementing change, and retaining higher level of performance despite environmental fluctuations as vital skill for its employees. Every organization wants ethically and responsible, to provide qualitative competitive product and qualitative competitive services. Training help to fill the gap by providing necessary skill required for individual. Training helps individual to learn so he can implement, improve and become innovative and helps organization to build leadership pipeline.

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