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Performance technology: The role of the training professional

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Performance technology: The role of the training professional

Abstract
According to Gary Worley (1988) in his article "Improving Productivity Through People" modem businesses face three major challenges: improving product quality, improving worker productivity, and competing in a globel [sic] marketplace. If the economy of the United States is going to continue to prosper, efficient worker performance is one of the primary concerns for the business world. This means increasing pressure for people to perform in jobs and increased emphasis on performance technology.
Performance Technology: The Role of the Training Professional

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of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Marie L. Grabenbauer
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This research paper by Marie Grabenbauer entitled: Performance Technology: The Role of the Training Professional

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirement for the Degree Master of Arts.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

According to Gary Worley (1988) in his article "Improving Productivity Through People" modern businesses face three major challenges: improving product quality, improving worker productivity, and competing in a global marketplace. If the economy of the United States is going to continue to prosper, efficient worker performance is one of the primary concerns for the business world. This means increasing pressure for people to perform in jobs and increased emphasis on performance technology.

In addition to the pressure of top performance on the job, the average American worker will change jobs five to six times in their work life due to the movement of our society to an information age and service economy (Brethower, 1988). By the year 2,000, 75% of all workers employed will need retraining. Most will be individuals who have already left a formal educational setting which means the training will occur at the workplace (ASTD, 1987).

The implications for the training field are obvious. Training and development is already growing at a phenomenal rate and is
comparable to higher education in complexity and nearly comparable in size. In the American Society of Training and Development's 1987 report "Serving the New Corporation" they state that $210 billion is currently being spent per year on training and development in private business while $238 billion per year is being spent on formal education (ASTD, 1987). Training is a growing industry and will continue to grow as the need for worker training continues to grow.

As Karen Brethower (1988) defines in her article "The Dozing Revolution Wakes Up" performance technology is "a body of knowledge that specifies outcomes very precisely and provides both the process to determine the causes of shortfalls or problems and the tools for creating the desired outcomes. In other words, once you specify an outcome required to solve a performance problem, you find the cause of that problem and you experiment with the change process in the middle until the required results are produced. The middle may be any combination of things: training, feedback, work structure, or many others" (p. 2).

The training professional will play an important role in the development of tomorrow's work force. How can the trainer motivate
people to participate in training sessions? Why is it important to train supervisors and managers how to get peak performance from their employees?

Training may not always be the solution to performance problems. The training professional needs to know when training is the answer to the performance problem and when other solutions are more appropriate. How will a training professional know whether or not training is the answer to the problem?

In addition to these challenges, when money is tight and times are tough, the training department is often one of the first departments cut according to M. White (personal communication November 15, 1987). Once training or other solutions to performance problems have been implemented, how can the training professional measure the cost effectiveness? How can trainers document the effectiveness to upper management in dollars and cents?

Training professionals will face many challenges as they try to help employees achieve peak performance in today's competitive marketplace. The successful trainer will be involved in improving employee performance in many ways in addition to training. The
purpose, then, of this paper is to explore these questions and look at probable answers.
CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Motivating Trainees

Frequent changes in job or the technology used on the job often lead to low worker productivity. One of the biggest challenges trainers will face in the future is that of motivating the trainees; both motivating trainees to participate in training sessions and motivating them to increase their productivity on the job. When people are forced into new jobs and then forced to attend training sessions to teach them how to do jobs they may not really want to do, the motivation level may be low. It is ultimately the trainer's responsibility to motivate the trainees and get them interested in the training sessions.

In an article by Thomas W. Koop (1988), he conducted a case study of the marketing of the Shopsmith's Mark V Multi-Purpose Tool. The Shopsmith's Mark V Multi-Purpose Tool is sold by conducting demonstrations in shopping malls. Koop compares the techniques the salespeople use to sell the tools to techniques that can be used by a trainer to get and keep the audience's attention. Trying to conduct a
training session in a shopping mall would be a trainer's nightmare:
The noise level is very high and the competition is great. However, those selling the Shopsmith's Mark V Multi-Purpose Tool have experienced great success.

When comparing a training session to the demonstrations conducted at shopping malls, the trainees are the customers. While conducting a training session, the trainer is marketing the material that is being presented in the session. Koop thinks some of the techniques used in the marketing of this tool may be applied to trainers when they are marketing their training sessions. He places the trainer in the role of a salesperson. In the following paragraphs several techniques Koop suggests for motivating an audience are discussed. When examining his suggestions, it became apparent that the techniques he suggests fall into Gagne's Nine Events of Instruction. They are: (a) gain the learners attention (b) inform learners of objectives (c) stimulate recall of prior learning (d) presentation of new material (e) student participation (f) student practice (g) feedback (h) testing, and (i) enhancement of learning. Koop's
techniques will be discussed as they relate to Gagne's nine events of learning.

Koop's (1988) suggestions for successfully motivating an audience include: "Inspire people, then instruct them" (p. 46). He suggests getting the audience's attention by whatever means is available, for example, by announcing that something is about to happen. Once the trainer has the attention of the audience, they can then begin the instruction. This is identical to Gagne's first event of instruction which is to gain the attention of the learner.

Gagne's second event of instruction correlates with Koop's conclusions to hire trainers who have empathy and ego drive. Too many trainers are familiar with a piece of job-related equipment but have little sensitivity to what it is like to be a novice operating it for the first time. It is important that trainers develop this sensitivity (Koop, 1988). Empathy is important in order for the audience to be able to identify with the trainer while ego drive is necessary for the trainer to assume a leadership role. This is particularly true when dealing with individuals who do not want to be at the training session. Convincing the participants that you are interested in them personally
and not trying to deceive them in any way will go a long way in winning their confidence. Gagne's second event of instruction is to inform the learner of the objectives. Dr. Sharon Smaldino (1988) in her paper entitled "The Events of Instruction" indicates that informing the learners of the objectives shows students that the teacher is sincere and honest.

Gagne's fourth event of instruction is the actual presentation of new material. He suggests using a variety of instructional materials and directing the students' attention to the important information within the instructional message (Smaldino, 1988). In Koop's case study he says "make sure trainees aren't bored otherwise, you'll lose their attention" (Koop, 1988, p. 46). According to Koop, if the presenter continues to talk for a long period of time, trainees may almost begin to be lulled by the sound of their voice. During the presentation of new material he suggests that interjecting other types of stimulation may help to keep the learner's attention.

People are often intimidated by new and different things. By showing trainees how easily they can master the tasks, they will be encouraged to learn new skills. Gagne's seventh event of instruction is
to provide learners with feedback about their performance so they are encouraged to keep trying. Koop (1988) recommends showing trainees how easily how the new tasks can be easily mastered.

According to Gagne' in his ninth event of instruction, enhancing retention and transfer, it is important to show students how they can use the new information when they leave the classroom (Smaldino, 1988). Koop (1988) recommends trainers show trainees how the training will improve their life. Often people are told they have to attend a training session and are not told why. By showing the trainees the benefits of participating in the seminar or training session, the trainer will be more likely to get the individual interested in participating. Everyone is human and interested in how they personally will benefit.

Gagne' and Koop are challenging the instructor/trainer to think about the learners and prepare them for learning before it actually takes place. People need to be prepared to receive new information before it is actually presented (Gagne', 1982). A well-designed training program is essential to ensure that learners will accept and
Train Managers to Motivate Employees

The old adage "nothing succeeds like success" seems to be a good starting point when teaching supervisors and managers how to motivate their employees. In Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, Jr.'s (1982) book *In Search of Excellence* they discuss the attribution theory. The attribution theory simply stated says that each of us likes to think of ourselves as successful. If people are successful in the completion of a task, they think it is because they are skilled and clever. If people fail in the accomplishment of a task, they think it is because of the system. In a psychological study, when asked to rate themselves on their ability to get along with others, 100% of all subjects rated themselves in the top half and 60% rated themselves in the top 10% (Peters & Waterman, 1982). What this suggests is that most people like to think of themselves as successful.

In addition to the concept that people like to think of themselves as successful is the fact that people tend to do better if they think they are doing well and they tend to do worse if they think they are not...
doing well. The implication for management is this; if managers want their people to do a good job, they should tell their employees they are already doing well. Both positive and negative reinforcement will produce changes in behavior, however, positive reinforcement tends to produce the results managers are seeking (Peters, & Waterman, 1982). What happens too often is that managers only tell people when they are doing something wrong. Managers need to constantly reinforce the quality of work employees are producing and help their employees develop the feeling that they are doing a good job. Sometimes if an employee is not doing a good job, the manager may have to find one aspect of the job that the employee is doing well and build from that starting point.

Another area in which many managers need training is in their attitude toward when training should be allowed. Training is often used as a reward for a job well done. The irony of a policy that promotes employee training as a reward for a job well done is that the employees who are most in need of training will never have an opportunity to learn the skills they need to improve their performance. In reality, training should be an integral part of the
personal and professional growth and development of all employees.

It is one of the trainer's many roles to train managers to be effective and to inform company leaders of the importance of training among all employees. When an employee is performing their job well, training can be a means of exchanging ideas with people who are doing similar jobs. Often these exchanges show employees a new approach or new idea to help keep the trainees interest in the job fresh and alive.

Alternatives to Training

In "The Psychology of Performance Management", Kenneth E. Hultman describes the experience of a new training manager in his attempt to solve the performance problems in four departments within the organization. He connected the performance problems to the managers of those departments and immediately sent the four managers to an intensive interpersonal supervision skills workshop. Six months later only one of the four managers remained with the company. The other three had been fired or quit for inadequate performance. What he discovered is that there were really four major, different reasons for the inadequate performance; commitment,
confidence, competence, and contingencies. Training was used as the solution to the performance problems and in only one case was lack of training the actual cause for the problem.

In the case of the manager who lacked commitment, she left the company shortly after the workshop. The manager had the skills to perform the job but discovered that her personal goals were different from those of the organization. After the training session, she realized she was not being fair to herself or to the company and submitted her resignation. In this particular situation the problem of a lack of commitment had to do with the manager having different values than those of the organization. In order for this manager to remain with the organization, it would be necessary for her to experience some type of change in her values.

The second manager Hultman discusses in his article lacked confidence. He had been promoted to a manager’s position from a production foreman where he had been successful and quite happy. He too had the skills to perform this new job, but did not trust himself to make a decision. In this situation, counseling may have been appropriate. However, this manager was fired instead of being given
this option. An effective trainer would have been able to identify the problem and make appropriate recommendations.

A third manager also had the skills to perform the job but refused to because of what was described as external factors. He did not feel support from upper management and was therefore not going to support the people he was supervising. This is a complicated problem involving more than the behavior of one individual. Organizational change may have been the prescription for this case. However, organizational change requires commitment from the top executives on down.

Training was not the answer to the problem in any of these three situations mentioned above. However, in the last case, one young women had the confidence and the commitment to perform the job, but lacked the skills. She was new to a management position and had never had an opportunity to develop the skills necessary to be a successful manager. After the training session, performance in her department greatly improved. In this particular situation training was the answer to the problem.

Answers to performance problems may include knowledge or skill
training, counseling, value change, or organizational development. Training plays an important role in the improvement of employee performance, however, there are times when it is not the solution to the problem. Trainers need to recognize what the real problems are and discover the right solutions to the problems. While conducting training sessions is a large part of what trainer do, they should also be able to assess the situation to determine whether or not training is appropriate and make recommendations for alternate solutions when appropriate.

**Measuring Performance**

One of the trainer's duties that is of particular importance is that of measuring the effectiveness of training. There is more and more pressure on training professionals to measure the costs/benefits of training programs. When profit margins are slim and dollars are tight, the training department will be one of the first departments scrutinized according to M. White (personal communication, November 15, 1987). Top level executives are interested in "bottom-line" results.

According to Lyle Spencer (1984) there are two ways to show
increased profits in business: to increase revenues (raise prices or increase volumes and sales) or to decrease expenses. Most "dollar" benefits in training are a result of cost avoidance "such as reducing the cost of time, people, materials, equipment downtime, turnover, or various expensive people problem events such as grievances, accidents, disabilites and so on" (p. 40).

One example of how training effectively paid off is explained in an article in by Al Esquivel (1987). The Tandy Wire and Cable Company was experiencing a very high incidence of on-the-job back related injuries. In order to alleviate that problem, Esquivel, the general manager, hired Back Systems Inc., a risk-management firm, to conduct training sessions for the Tandy employees on safe ways to perform work related tasks. The purpose of the training sessions was "to improve safety and reduce on-the-job injuries" (Esquivel, 1987). The results of the training were phenomenal. In the first half of 1987, Tandy did not experience a single major back injury. The company paid only $9000 in workers' compensation costs compared to $333,000 in 1986 and $290,000 in 1985. The program "paid for itself" according to Esquivel. The total cost of the training program was less
than one-half the cost of one major back injury.

Another justification for the training department is in the measurement of employee performance. Performance measurement can be used to determine personnel practices such as promotions, hirings and firings (Cantor, 1988). Performance testing can be used to monitor the progress of trainees through the various stages of training or to determine what is the most appropriate job placement for an individual based on their abilities. Testing can also be used to determine if an employee is appropriate for an advanced position.

Performance can be measured in two ways; either by a written test or by observation of how well an individual can perform a task (Smaldino, 1988). Written tests are best for measuring information and cognitive processing while skills ability is best measured by performance testing (Cantor, 1988). When developing a performance test, there are two primary considerations; the reliability and validity of the testing. If a test is reliable, the learners will respond to the questions in the same way over time. If a test is valid, it will be job or task related.
Chapter III

Summary

With the advances in modern technology, people will be making many career changes in the upcoming years. This is creating a need for increased training on-the-job and people to conduct this training. Today the amount of money being spent for training in private business is nearly comparable to the cost of formal education. The people who are conducting on-the-job training need to be prepared to train participants for rapidly changing technology and job duties. Those who enter the field of training need to be prepared to face the many challenges that lie before them. Training is not simply a matter of preparing instructional materials and presenting the information to groups of people. It is much more complicated than many people understand it to be.

When implementing training, it needs to be conducted in a fashion that will interest and enthuse the training participants. One of the first concerns of the training professional is to gain and keep the attention of the participants. Materials need to be presented in a manner that will encourage training participants to learn.
It is one the trainer's many roles to inform managers and company leaders of the importance of training and the need for it among all employees. Teaching managers how to get the best performance from their employees is of utmost importance. Even if an employee is performing their job well, training can be a means of exchanging ideas with people who are doing similar jobs. Training should never be used as a reward for good performance. It should be used to help people reach their potential and continue their professional development and personal growth.

Today's training professional should be able to determine whether or not training is the answer to performance problems. If it is not, they need to be able to make recommendations for other types of solutions to the problems. Counseling, values clarification and organizational development are several solutions to performance problem that need to be considered as alternatives to training. The training professional will need to keep abreast of new solutions to performance problems and keep an open mind when considering alternatives.

Accountability continues to be a concern for professionals in all
walks of life and the training professional is no different. Top level management is now insisting on seeing the "bottom-line" benefits of training and will continue to demand costs/benefits. The training professional needs to understand the benefits and be able to outline the savings to the organization in terms of dollars and cents. In addition to the "bottom-line" benefits of training, there are other benefits such as determining which jobs will be most appropriate for individuals and when employees are good candidates for promotions.

Perhaps the most important element of being a training professional is to keep abreast of new developments and new technologies in order to pass along the current trends to training participants and decision-makers within their organizations. Training appears to be an exciting career for the individual who is ready to face the multitude of challenges which present themselves to the trainer of today and tomorrow.
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