

EMPLOYEE TRAINING

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Employee productivity is tied to many factors, one of which is the amount and types of training they are given. Effective employee training must be carefully planned and conducted. A mismanaged training effort is worse than no training at all. Precious labor dollars can be wasted very quickly in useless training activities.

Following is an outline of the types of training successful organizations and firms are conducting.

Orientation Training

Excellent hiring techniques are defeated by poor breaking-in methods. Personnel management research shows that most people vividly remember their first day on a job. As a manager in charge of breaking-in a new employee, remember that the newcomer may feel conspicuous and uncertain. Although he wants to make a good impression, he may hesitate to ask questions because he does not want to appear stupid. The newcomer probably knows no one in the organization and wants to be accepted. The new employee's immediate supervisor may wish to use the following procedures for breaking-in a new worker.

- Review in detail company policies and rules, even though they were discussed during the hiring interview. Cover the following points verbally and give written information concerning them to the new worker: lay-off and separation procedures, conduct on the job, work hours, absenteeism policy, pay day, leave and holiday policy.

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- Introduce the new worker to all employees with whom he will be in contact. Let each of the old employees know at the time of introduction exactly what the new worker is to do.
- Show the new employee the location of facilities such as wash rooms and lounges.
- Start the new employee on the job by thoroughly explaining his duties. Furnish a copy of the written job description to the employee. He should be encouraged to ask questions at this time.
- Let the new employee perform the duties. The nature of the work will govern how this is done. Encourage the new worker to ask why he does each task, procedure or process.
- Follow up with the new employee at his work site. The frequency of this action will depend upon the type of work. Follow-up, however, is the step most frequently overlooked by supervisors. New workers too often are turned loose on the job and left on their own to become productive. Employees in this insecure predicament may waste time and materials, and are often discouraged and frustrated.

Refresher Training

Refresher training for the work force is a continuous process in any organization. The need for this type of training usually can be determined by watching closely for certain tell-tale signs. Signs indicating a need for refresher training are:

1. Bottlenecks in the organization resulting from paper flow, goods or product processing or customer flow.

2. Trends in customer complaints, absenteeism, overtime and labor turnover.
3. Wasted products or materials.
4. General appearance of the place of business.

The need for extensive refresher training can be minimized if actions which generate these needs are properly handled by management. Most refresher training springs from the introduction of new or changed equipment, layout, policies, products, procedures and organization. Training can be facilitated greatly if those employees who are to be directly affected in such changes are involved in the discussion stages which precede the actual change. An example would be to involve the person who is to operate a new piece of equipment in the "shopping" stage prior to buying the equipment. Those who are to be directly involved can usually ask the most pertinent questions during these early stages.

Refresher training will be most productive when it is tailored to fit very specific needs of specific individuals. The idea that everyone needs the same dosage has many adverse effects. One is that those who do not need it are frustrated and bored. Another is that those who really need it do not usually get enough; thus they feel insecure in the job.

Methods of conducting refresher training must vary according to each situation. Some of the methods to consider include: factory training, on-the-job train-

ing (OJT), "in-house" seminars/workshops, vestibule school and local vocational/technical courses.

Up-Grade Training

Many employees expect to be given opportunities to advance in the organization. Meaningful efforts to achieve this require careful planning.

The first step is to ensure that each worker is provided a promotion path in the organization. Where the path dead-ends is a real concern to the worker and should be explained when he is hired. Employee progress along the path, and revisions in the path, should be discussed with each worker annually during the performance evaluation interview.

In addition, training should be designed to facilitate an employee's movement along the path. Organizations that use this approach enjoy these benefits:

1. Vacancies are more easily filled, as the usual thing is to hire at the lowest levels of jobs. Continuity of operations is maintained.
2. Turnover is reduced because the work force senses a "feeling of purpose." Many other benefits to the organization derive from this dimension in motivation.
3. Returns on costs of training can more easily be computed and analyzed.

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