

LESSON 8

EFFECTIVE TRAINING

In previous lessons of this unit you were explained about Conceptual background of training, education and development. You now know how important training is if an organization has to survive in long run.

After reading this lesson you will be able to

1. explain what is effective training
2. to identify the factors influencing training effectiveness
3. to conduct effective training sessions.
4. know the significance of humour in training

Introduction

Managing the social impact of the organization is the most complex task of management. It is dependent on the manager's ability to 'think through' the total effectiveness of the organization. An organization can be seen as an effective organization essentially at three levels.

Firstly, The organisation is productive i.e it is able to produce the goods or services it is intended to produce,

Secondly, The organization is efficient i.e it produces the goods or services with a minimum expenditure of resources particularly the scarce resources and

Thirdly, the organisation has reputation for excellence it has a public image that its goods or services are of a high quality audits management is alert to its responsibilities within and without the organisation.

Managerial Effectiveness and Information

The effectiveness of a manager depends on four aspects information skill, vision and motivation.

Information is what the manager learnt in his academic career in training courses, by reading books and periodicals and by listening to authorities and thinkers in the field. This covers three types of information: Functional Information, organizational Information, and Environment Information.

Apart from these three types of information, the manager requires two skills to ensure his effectiveness.

The first skill is the functional skill i.e the ability to use the techniques required for operating in his functional area. Functional skill differs from functional information. Information can be obtained by reading or listening. Skill needs actual practice over a minimal period of time.

Each functional area has its own skills, Sales manager must know salesmanship, production manager must know machine loading, materials manager must know inventory control and so on. However there is one skill that all of them require and that is interpersonal skill.

Interpersonal skill is the ability to deal with people. A typical manager is working in a hierarchical set up, consisting of the boss, colleagues and subordinates. Most managers have also to deal with people from outside the organization, i.e customers,

suppliers, government officials etc. The effectiveness of a manager i.e his ability to get things done obviously depends on how well he can tackle these people.

The effectiveness in T & D process will depend on the accuracy of the following:

1. Training need identification
2. Training need assessment
3. Training need justification
4. Budgeting and controlling the cost.
5. Selection of learning process & training methodology
6. Planning, designing & conducting the process
7. Evaluation of programme, the trainee & the feedback records.

Of course, the role of T & D specialist can not be ignored in this process as he is the facilitator and motivator and his perceptions, competence and attitude play an important role in making T & D programme really effective and fruitful

In coming lesson you will be studying these aspects in details:

How to Ensure Better Transfer of Learning

Anyone responsible for designing, managing or conducting a program knows the frustration experienced when participants in the program do not, cannot or will not apply what supposedly "They were taught." There are many reasons for this lack of transfer, some of which are beyond the control of those who provided the instructions. Often those who can help people apply the learning in the "real world" do not know how, do not agree with what is to be applied or in some other way inhibit rather than support the application process.

In spite of such "real world" conditions, certain factors inhibit effective (proper and consistent) learning transfer that should be dealt with in the formal (academic-clinical) instructional process. These factors include: confirming clear concepts, proper use of simulation and enhancing social transmission. Incorporating these three elements into the learning and application process can reduce the often severe loss of learning that occurs when participants move into or return to their responsibilities.

Confirming Clear Concepts

In this day of performance oriented training/education it is often overlooked that learners need to have clear mental pictures associated with the tasks they are taught to perform or refine. Many people complete a programme with the ability to demonstrate certain desired actions. but with no real concept of what they are doing, why the results and how their work relates to other elements they will confront in the "real world", When they confront real situations, they are caught off-balance because their mental picture of the situation is incomplete or fuzzy.

The program designer and instructor should make sure that participants have formed clearer, “context” pictures so that they have all the needed elements in their minds to guide their future actions. With concept-learning as opposed to the more typical information learning participants who have formed concepts can recognize when, how and why to use their learning in situations beyond the instructions

Take, for example a task or responsibility participants should have learned. They should be able to confirm, before they complete the instruction that they have clear concepts mental pictures) of the desired results they are to produce; how such results relate to broader outcomes and to results produced by others; and what specific actions, resources and constraints are involved in producing such results.

Of assume they should have learned how a particular system operates. In that case they should be able to confirm that they understand: the purpose of the system; the function of each component; and when the system is and is not operating properly. In Examples, if such concepts are incomplete, insurance or fuzzy, proper transfer of the task or knowledge of the system is in serious jeopardy.

A number of techniques exist for confirming concepts, most of which involve the participants in some form of the thinking process called “classifying.” This process requires a person to identify and justify whether each of a number of given situations is or is not an example of the concept he or she is supposed to have learned. To do so, the person must use both his or her current concept and data about each particular situation. The value of this confirmation process is that it provides valid evidence about the, accuracy and completeness of the person’s concept and his or her ability to apply it, so that if either is found wanting remediation can be provided before he or she leaves the learning environment.

Multiple choice, true-false and yes-no answer objective tests do not confirm concepts. Nor do explanations that do not include application of particular ‘concepts. For instance, a person has not confirmed that he or she has a sufficient concept of the operation of a machine by naming its parts or stating its use. If he or she cannot identify situations in which the machine is and is not operating as it should and then explain the structural and operational relationships involved he or she will probably run into difficulty in applying that

To summaries this issue, instructors and program developers should ensure that participants have developed conceptual knowledge of the task, procedures systems, etc

That makes up the content of the program. Without such confirmed knowledge, performance on the job is likely to be rote rather than intelligent and continued progress toward competency is unnecessarily difficult. The most important concept for participants to form is a clear, complete, accurate mental picture of the end-result they are to produce. Too often, competency is thought to be what someone does rather than what someone produces. And if the person lacks the proper concept of what is to be produced -consistently and under varying conditions- he or she is not likely to realize that his or her performance is incompetent, much less know how to improve it.

Proper use of situation

In an ideal program application of learning is never left to chance. Participants under the guidance of their instructor, follow a “cumulative-rotation’s” process. That is, they rotate between learning and application so that as each new task, procedure, strategy and concept is learned, it is applied cumulatively to the real situation until the total desired outcome is produced. In this way not only does guided application take place, but needed attitudes (and teamwork) can be built or reinforced, because the focus is on the end-result rather than on each isolated specific learning.

In many training education situations, it is possible with proper planning to create the type of cumulative-rotation instructional process described above. There are many situations however, in which simulated (clinical) application is the only feasible means to create such a process. With the advent of sophisticated technology remarkable simulations of real situations can be and have been developed. Unfortunately, instructors and program

In many training education situations, it is possible with proper planning to create the type of cumulative-rotation instructional process described above. There are many situations however, in which simulated (clinical) application is the only feasible means to create such a process. With the advent of sophisticated technology remarkable simulations of real situations can be and have been developed. Unfortunately, instructors and program developers often become more intrigued with the “Technology” of the simulations than with the learning results that could and should be produced. the same “”means rather than ends” focus also dominates the participants .The key to effective learning through simulation are the cumulative-rotation process and the “debrief” that follows each application .Often debriefing is the weakest linking in the instructional process .because instructors do not know how to Involve participants in using the particular thinking processes that maximize the application of learning .the most essential is the need for a systematic thinking process for identifying the critical similarities and difference between the earlier “academic” situation(lecture film demonstration ,etc.) the stimulated (clinical)situation and later on, between both those and the “real world situation

This thinking skill and those involved in projecting predicting planning, assessing and critiquing (and the instructional strategies that foster such thinking) need to be thoroughly understood by both designers and instructors of simulation exercises. Other-wise, the preparation for and the debriefing of such experiences can be dominated by the ~instructor. There should be opportunities for participants to properly use the thinking processes involved in the transfer/application of learning.

The term “hands-on” is often used to refer to “real” as opposed to “academic” or “class-room” learning. Unfortunately, many designers and instructors confuse real with concrete experience, and this confusion can create unnecessary difficulties in the transfer of learning. A simple example is training in the CPE procedure-e. Usually, participants are exposed first to the procedure through live or filmed demonstration, followed by a “hands-on” experience with a life like dummy. The dummy provides a “concrete” in the sense that people have physical -

operational contact with what is to be learned. Without guided practice however in how to determine the critical similarities and difference between those experiences and the actual one, the ultimate proper application of the “hands-on” learning to real situations can be impaired.

As a general principle, simulation” hands-on” experiences and the technology that creates them should not be designed or used until the developers and instructors have accurately identified and incorporated the thinking processes participants need to achieve the desired’ earning result. in such clinical activities, that result should be proper fusion and application concepts cause-effect principles attitudes and skills, followed by proper analysis and projection to the “real world”. Otherwise participants can be lulled into a sense /’ of confidence that can lead to trouble.

Enhancing Social Transmission

If the purpose of instruction is to lay the groundwork for competency, then it needs to include more than knowledge and/or skill development. Again, competency is what competency produces, and producing desire~ results consistently requires certain attitudes and teamwork skills, as well as concepts and technical skills The advent of instructional technology, systems learning and individualized (self paced) instruction has seriously impeded progress toward effective learning transfer and competency building.

The reasons are many, but among the more important are lack of attention to attitude-building; emphasis on “atomized” rather than “contexted” learning and inadequate opportunities for “rather than contexted” learning and inadequate opportunities for “social transmission.”

The term “social transmission” was used by the psychologist Piaget to refer to the need for learners to consistently and productively communicate what they are learning to other people is research and that of other indicates that people learn better, faster and retain longer when they have frequent and appropriate opportunities to verbalize and share what they are learning with other learners or with instructors. There is some evidence to suggest that effective social transmission also plays a critical role in the development of attitudes and self-confidence

In many programs particularly those that rely primarily or solely on independent learning modules computer technology or programmed instruction, the use of social transmission as a technique for building and reinforcing learning is minimal. Even in so-called group-learning situations, instructors often do not know precisely what learners need to “transmit” why and how best to help them. As a result, discussions and interactions do not lead to sustained productive learning that when applied, creates competency

Because of technological advances, productive interaction between work-term members will be more critical than it has been in the past. The skills involved can and should.

Be built in as an essential element in any training/education program, because the instructional environment can provide an excellent opportunity to learning terms that. learn to use interaction skills to produce better learning results- not just for the team, but for each individual in the team. Then, when

individuals complete the program and move on (either to the work situation or further training/education), they are better prepared to work collaboratively to produce quality results.

Too often, organizations try to deal with need for good communication and interaction skills by creating special training programs that focus solely on these elements. It is far more cost-efficient and results-effective to build them into new or existing technical supervisory or management training programs so that people learn to use these skills as an integral part of their training and education

Educators and training professionals have almost complete control over these three factor that affect learning transfer. They can be incorporated without changing the content of programs .Each factor focuses on what can be done by design and instruction to assist the learner. Strengthening anyone or all of these factors should better confirm that’ “what was taught is what was learned”, and “what was learned is more likely to be applied -properly and consistently.”

General Training Tips to Make Training Effective

When planning training think about:

- your objectives - keep them in mind all the time
- how many people you are training
- the methods and format you will use
- when and how long the training lasts
- where it happens
- how you will measure its effectiveness
- how you will measure the trainees’ reaction to it

When you you give skills training to someone use this simple five-step approach:

1. prepare the trainee - take care to relax them as lots of people find learning new things stressful
2. explain the job/task, skill, project, etc - discuss the method and why; explain standards and why; explain necessary tools, equipment or systems
3. provide a demonstration - step-by-step - the more complex, the more steps - people cannot absorb a whole complicated task all in one go - break it down - always show the correct way - accentuate the positive - seek feedback and check understanding
4. have the trainee practice the job - we all learn best by actually doing it - (‘I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand’ - Confucius)
5. monitor progress - give positive feedback - encourage, coach and adapt according to the pace of development

Creating and using progress charts are helpful, and are essential for anything complex - if you can’t measure it you can’t manage it. It’s essential to use other training tools too for planning, measuring, assessing, recording and following up on the person’s training.

Breaking skills down into easily digestible elements enables you to plan and manage the training activities much more effectively. Training people in stages, when you can build up each skill, and

then an entire role, from a series of elements, keeps things controlled, relaxed and always achievable in the mind of the trainee.

Establishing a relevant 'skill set' is essential for assessing and prioritising training for any role. It is not sufficient simply to assess against a job description, as this does not reflect skills, only responsibilities, which are different. Establishing a 'behaviour set' is also very useful, but is a more difficult area to assess and develop. If you want more information or guidance about working with Skill and Behaviour Sets, and advanced assessment and training planning methods please contact us, giving a brief outline of your situation. Using Skill-Sets to measure individual's skills and competencies is the first stage in producing a training needs analysis for individuals, a group, and a whole organisation. You can see and download a free Skill-Set tool and Training Needs Analysis tool the free resources page.

Psychometric tests (and even graphology - handwriting analysis) are also extremely useful for training and developing people, as well as recruitment, which is the more common use. Psychometric testing produces reliable assessments which are by their nature objective, rather than subjective, as tends to be with your own personal judgement. Your organisation may already use systems of one sort or another, so seek advice. See the section on psychometrics or get in touch.

Some tips to make learning more enjoyable and effective:

- keep instructions positive ('do this' rather than 'don't do this')
- avoid jargon - or if you can't then explain them and better still provide a written glossary
- you must tailor training to the individual, so you need to be prepared to adapt the pace according to the performance once training has begun
- encourage, and be kind and thoughtful - be accepting of mistakes, and treat them as an opportunity for you both to learn from them
- focus on accomplishment and progress - recognition is the fuel of development
- offer praise generously
- be enthusiastic - if you show you care you can expect your trainee to care too
- check progress regularly and give feedback
- invite questions and discussion
- be patient and keep a sense of humour

Induction training tips:

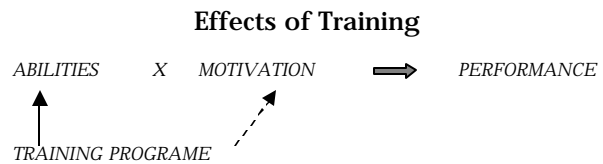
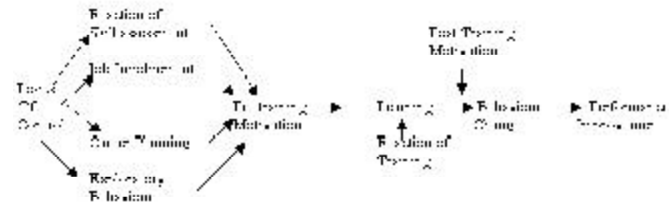
- assess skill and knowledge level before you start
- teach the really easy stuff first
- break it down into small steps and pieces of information
- encourage pride
- cover health and safety issues fully and carefully
- try to identify a mentor or helper for the trainee

As a manager, supervisor, or an organisation, helping your people to develop is the greatest contribution you can make to their well-being. Do it to your utmost and you will be rewarded

many times over through greater productivity, efficiency, environment and all-round job-satisfaction.

Remember also to strive for your own personal self-development at all times - these days we have more opportunity and resource available than ever to increase our skills, knowledge and self-awareness. Make use of it all.

Interaction of Motivation and Learning



Tips for Assessing Organizational Training Effectiveness

Look at and understand the broad organizational context and business environment: the type, size, scale, spread, geography, logistics, etc., of the business or organization. This includes where and when people work (which influences how and when training can be delivered). Look also at the skills requirements for the people in the business in general terms as would influence training significance and dependence - factors which suggest high dependence on training are things like: fast-changing business (IT, business services, healthcare, etc), significant customer service activities, new and growing businesses, strong health and safety implications (chemicals, hazardous areas, transport, utilities). Note that all businesses have a high dependence on training, but in certain businesses training need is higher than others - change (in the business or the market) is the key factor which drives training need.

Assess and analyse how training and development is organized and the way that training is prioritised. Think about improvements to training organization and planning that would benefit the organisation.

Review the business strategy/positioning/mission/plans (and HR strategy if any exists) as these statements will help you to establish the central business aims. Training should all be traceable back to these business aims, however often it isn't - instead it's often arbitrary and isolated.

Assess how the training relates to the business aims, and how the effectiveness of the training in moving the business towards these aims is measured. Often training isn't measured at all - it needs to be.

Look at the details and overview of what training is planned for the people in the business. The training department or HR department should have this information. There should be a

clear written training plan, including training aims, methods, relevance and outputs connected to the wider aims of the business.

Look also at how training relates to and is influenced by appraisals and career development; also recruitment, and general ongoing skills/behavioural assessment. There should be process links between these activities, particularly recruitment and appraisals, and training planning. Detailed training needs should be driven substantially by staff appraisals. (It goes without saying that there should be consistent processes and application of staff appraisals, and that these should use suitable job performance measures that are current and relevant to the operations and aims of the business.)

Look particularly at management training and development. The bigger the business, generally the bigger the dependence on management training and development.

Look at new starter induction training - it's critical and typically a common failing in situations where anything higher than a low percentage of new starters leave soon after joining.

Look for the relationships between training, qualifications, job grades and pay/reward levels - these activities and structures must be linked, and the connections should be visible to and understood by all staff.

Look especially at staff turnover (% per annum of total staff is the key indicator), exit interviews, customer satisfaction surveys, staff satisfaction surveys (if they exist) for other indicators as to staff development and motivational needs and thereby, training deficiencies.

Look for any market research or competitor analysis data which will indicate business shortcomings and weaknesses, which will imply staff training needs, obviously in areas of the most important areas of competitive weakness in relation to the business positioning and strategy.

Look to see if there is director training and development - many directors have never been trained for their roles, and often hide from and resist any effort to remedy these weaknesses.

Base training recommendations and changes on improving training effectiveness in terms of:

- relevance to organizational aims
- methods of staff assessment
- training design/sourcing
- training type, mix and suitability, given staff and business circumstances (consider all training options available - there are very many and some are relatively inexpensive, and provide other organizational benefits; in-house, external training courses and seminars, workshops, coaching, mentoring, job-swap, secondment, distance-learning, day-release, accredited/qualification-linked, etc)
- remedies for identified organizational and business performance problem areas, eg., high staff turnover, general attrition or dissatisfaction levels, customer complaints, morale, supplier retention and relationships, wastage and shrinkage, legal and environmental compliance, recruitment difficulties, management and director succession, and other

key performance indicators of the business (which should be stated in business planning documents)

- comparative costs of different types of training per head, per staff type/level
- measurement of training effectiveness, and especially feedback from staff being trained: interview departmental heads and staff to see what they think of training - how it's planned, delivered, measured, and how effective it is

Creating the Most Effective Training

By Mark Rose, University of Oklahoma Outreach Executive Program - Team Quest

I'm often asked what I do in my job. It usually goes something like, "What do you do for the University of Oklahoma?" "I help equip teams with skills and tools to become more effective," I reply. "My main focus is using experiential learning for team development." This answer typically results in glassy eyes, a nod of the head and a quick change of the subject.

To be fair, most people don't know the amount of work it takes to be a trainer, much less care. But, to be a good trainer, there has to be some structure to it. The good news is that there is a model for the design of effective training. Most trainers have learned that no matter what they are teaching, they have to use different ways to meet the variety of learning styles of their participants. Some trainers might intuitively use different ways to cover their content but not know why it works - they just know that it does. Good trainers know how and why using a variety of delivery components can create the most effective training.

The premise for creating the most effective training is built on the foundation of Malcolm Knowles' work (originally in 1973) who was critical in developing the idea of Andragogy or Adult Learning Theory. Andragogy is based on several assumptions:

- Adults need to know why they should learn something.
- Adults need to direct their own learning.
- Adults have a variety of experiences that can be used as resources for other adult learners, and they prefer experiential techniques.
- Adults are ready to learn when they have a need for a knowledge or skill that can be applied to their life.
- Adults have a life-centered orientation to learning.
- Most adults are motivated to continue growing and developing.

Using these assumptions of Adult Learning Theory, we modified a common model for instructional design that uses three different components for effective training. The model shows that a relatively equal distribution of these three components provides the most effective training for adult learners.

Content-This is the subject matter as illustrated by notes in the Participant's Handbook, lecture, notes created by the learners, etc. It relates to the competencies presented in the training.

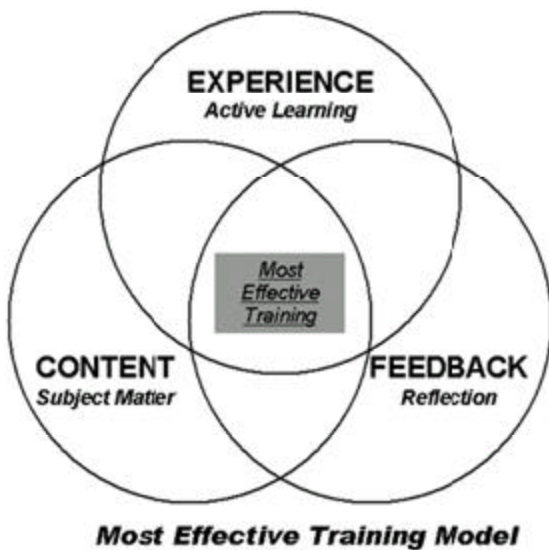
Experience-This is the active learning that participants experience which encourages their discovery of a learning point or their practice of a new skill. It can be a game or physical

activity, but it can also be a written exercise or group discussion. A session should offer a variety of auditory, visual and kinaesthetic experiences, neither all games nor all discussions.

Feedback-This is the participants' **reflection** upon a competency's relevance, their personal application of the session's content or the significance of their own experience. It is frequently facilitated by the trainer, but may also be facilitated by the group.

For example, you might be providing training on stages of group development with a newly formed work team. The **Content** component could include a paper copy of Tuckman's Stages of Group Development (1965). You would explain the model and the characteristics of each stage. This would be a brief overview so that the team members could have a common language about the model. Some trainers call this 'frontloading' which is a way to introduce a topic to your group before an experience. The Experience component could be any type of activity where the group is engaged in learning about group development. Examples of this component could be watching a video of another group interacting.

Finally, the **Feedback** component would include some type of reflection about the activity they experienced. After watching the video of another group interacting, the facilitator might ask group members questions about what they saw and where that fits into the stages of group development.



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This is just one example of how a trainer might use this three component model for designing effective training. An important thing to remember is for the most effective training to take place, the delivery of each major topic should include approximately equal proportions of all three components - Content, Experience and Feedback. Throughout each training, the order of the components should be varied so that each is modeled introducing, exploring and summarizing a topic.

Significance of Training

Humour in Training

Many trainers feel that training is a serious business - and, to a point, they are correct. It's true to say, we sometimes struggle to

show ourselves as a valuable, important part of the company and in some cases are even seen as hippy do-gooders who waste resources and money. "The last thing I need", I hear you say, "is for the CEO to walk by and see us all throwing beanbags or splitting our sides laughing".

In this article, though, I will share with you my philosophy on humour that will argue the opposite - i.e. that training is indeed serious, but the training experience needn't be! This philosophy is summed up nicely with an Oscar Wilde quote, which I'll share with you at the end of the article.

I'm often inspired by quotes and sayings, so I've chosen two of them to illustrate my points to you today.

1. "Laughter is the shortest distance between two people" - Anon

Almost all training sessions will begin with some sort of icebreaker or game. The reason? As professional trainers, we realise that it is our responsibility to make these people comfortable, relaxed and open. These are pre-requisites to adult learning and make the whole experience more pleasant for all involved.

If your training programme requires participants to interact or work as a team, then it is even more vital that there is a rapport and a trust between them, if they are to derive maximum benefit from the activities.

I tell you here and now there is no better way to achieve this than to get them laughing together.

You don't believe me? Ask anyone who saw this year's series of "Child of our time" on BBC television. Professor Robert Winston ran an experiment with two children of about 4 years of age. He sat one boy and one girl, who had never met, in front of a funny video. While watching it together, it was as though cupid himself crept into the room. They laughed so much that all barriers between the unacquainted children crumbled and the little girl couldn't resist the urge to put her arm around the boy. He didn't complain and, shortly after, the rapport was such that she planted a peck on his cheek without a word of warning!

Let's hope your training participants show more self-control!

Still not convinced? Ask any waiter what is the single most effective way to get a good tip. It's not the food and it's not pouring the wine every time the customer puts down their glass. "Get them laughing" the waiter will say. "Don't try to be Billy Connolly or laugh at anyone, but if you help them to laugh, they'll relax immediately and you'll have your taxi fair home from that one table". I'm quoting myself there, by the way - I was that waiter and there are more parallels to being a trainer than you'd realise!

So, in a nutshell, humour helps the group to relax and to quickly and easily develop a feeling of unity, rapport and trust. What more would you want for your group? Oh yes, you want them to learn too. You'd better keep reading then.

2. "Laughter is good for you - it's like jogging on the inside" - Anon

In case you didn't already know, laughing is very, very good for your health. A quick web search will back up my

open policy dress code should be introduced, along with the encouragement of personal expression. It is of little consequence that the Star Wars frieze above Eamon's desk doesn't float your boat. If it helps him use the Force, then why not?

A bit of bribery goes a long way. Competitive salaries with regular reviews, a pension plan and health insurance schemes are major factors that determine how happy workers feel in their jobs. On-the-job stress is greatly reduced once people know that they won't have to secure a second job to feed the family. Perks such as mobile phones/company cars/pet elephants can also help employees feel appreciated. Because above all, employees, like every female cast member of *Guys and Dolls*, just want to be loved.

Morale can be boosted with simple things like staff outings and lunches. However, don't be afraid to get creative with your de-stressing methods. If you feel that your employees would become more productive with a neck rub every Tuesday, then get thee to a masseuse.

Bad staff relations can be a major cause of stress. If certain employees think that their manager makes Hannibal Lecter look reasonable, then it's time for action. A safe grievance procedure should be put in place, where employees can air their concerns without embarrassment. Training schemes for managers can also help to nip potential problems in the bud.

So if you are tired of seeing shaking workers glowering at you from behind the photocopier, it's time to de-stress that workplace. Look forward to improved productivity and lots of smiling - and that's just from you. After all, you did get to choose the masseuse...

By David Granirer*

Introduction by Susan Heathfield

I've featured David Granirer at the About HR site in the past because he combines wit with useful information in an approachable writing style. As I visit workplaces these days, I see a lot of up-tight people who are worried about their futures and their opportunities. In these uncertain times, David is right, often the one thing we do control is our reaction to the work situation in which we find ourselves.

I'm a serious proponent of empowerment, as any of you who have read this site for any time know. Consequently, choose to be a cheerleader at work. Choose to have a say and make a difference. Choose to contribute your best talents and skills. Your workplace will be better for your contribution and that will be a good thing for both you and your organization. David Granirer tells you more.

Regards,

Susan

Humor for Retention

Picture this: a team of welfare workers on the front-lines of a poor neighborhood, serving difficult, high-needs clients. And if that's not tough enough, each has a caseload of about 300 and works for an organization undergoing massive funding cuts, downsizing, and policy changes.

But every day after coffee it's the same. The supervisor and two workers appear in the reception area. "What song do you wanna

hear? Do you wanna hear Jazz? Rock? Folk?" Then, "playing" accordion folders and staple removers as finger cymbals, they launch into the world's worst rendition of "Across The Universe" by John Lennon, to the hysterical laughter of their colleagues.

"It's our way of keeping up morale," says a team member. "We're so overwhelmed, so stressed, so burned out. This is how we keep our sanity."

As more and more organizations reengineer, merge, restructure, downsize, rightsize, and even capsize, employees confront uncertainty on an almost daily basis. The rules keep changing in terms of what they're supposed to do, how they're supposed to do it, who they do it for, and whether they get to do it at all. And since most have little or no control over the making of these rules, the result is often a sense of powerlessness that translates into increased stress, decreased wellness, demoralization, absenteeism, and lower productivity, all of which affect rates of employee retention. And we all know that people are an organization's number one asset, and losing them costs money.

So the big question for both individuals and organizations is: how do you keep up spirits, continue to work effectively, and maintain health and sanity in a crazy-making situation? The team of welfare workers described chooses to laugh. They could also choose despair, cynicism, bitterness, or negativity, but instead team members choose laughter. As one worker states, "We could either cry, or we could laugh, but you can only cry for so long. We'd had enough of crying, and it was time to do something else."

So, how do you help employees, who have little or no control over external events, survive a crazy-making situation? Organizations need to encourage employees to take control over the one aspect of the situation they do control - how they choose to respond to it. And on those days where workers feel overwhelmed, overworked, and have no idea what's going to happen next, the only rational, life-affirming response is to go find some colleagues, and break out the clown noses, kazoos, and Groucho glasses.

Why Laughter?

Why is laughter such a positive choice? We all know that it makes us feel good, but in today's bottom-line oriented workplace, the term "feel good" is too nebulous to have much impact on how people go about structuring their job interactions and professional relationships. And most organizations are not going to promote humor as part of their culture because some "touchy feely" wellness devotee thinks that having the boss come to work dressed as a chicken will create a happy afterglow.

So any discussion of the benefits of laughter needs to be more tangible and focused on addressing positive morale, a major factor contributing to the retention of valued employees. Remember though, humor is a coping mechanism to aid in employee retention, not a cure-all for other systemic problems affecting organizations.

Activity and Assignments

1. What is effective training.

2. What are major factors contributing in making training effective.

3. High light significance of Humour in training.

4. What is the role of trainer in making it a success.

5. Why is it important for trainer to understand about effective training.
