



Introduction to Trainer Skill

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Explore the characteristics of a successful training programme.

A Successful Training Programmed

Defining Successful Training

We may all have different ideas about what makes for a successful training session. As a trainer, you have objectives to meet. As a supporter of training (or someone paying for it), your boss also has objectives. They may or may not match those of the trainer. Trainees join a training class with a range of expectations, from a burning need to learn new skills, to the need for a day away from the workplace where phones ring or interruptions abound.

Test your knowledge

What exactly is training?

What do we want people to learn? How do we help?

What can training do?

Can you distinguish between the two kinds of trainers: the specialists and the non-specialists or generalists?

Do you consider yourself more of a specialist or a generalist?

About Audiences

The trainer wants a group of trainees who...

The trainee wants a trainer who...

The employer wants employees/trainees who...

Advantages of Workplace Training

Test your knowledge

What are some of the problems that send companies seeking the services of a trainer or of training?

What do you see as advantages to training?

What Makes a Successful Trainer?

Key Characteristics

Some managers delegate training responsibilities to a member of the work group. This approach can succeed if the individual is carefully selected and properly prepared. (We hope that this will always be the case!) The following characteristics are necessary to do a good job with delivering training.

Desire to Teach

A person who does not like training assignments will probably fail to completely transfer learning. People who do not enjoy public speaking will have the same problem. A person who enjoys helping others learn, on the other hand, will probably enjoy delivering training and have better results.

Working Knowledge of the Job

A trainer does not have to be an expert in the job, but unless they can competently explain and demonstrate the job tasks, the training will not improve performance.

Ability to Convey Understanding

Some people have difficulty communicating what they know. They may talk very slowly or too rapidly, or use complicated language that confuses trainees. These people are not effective trainers.

Patience

Training requires an objective, patient personality. Employees must feel that the trainer wants to help them, is interested in their growth, will be patient with their mistakes, and will be pleased by their success.

A Sense of Humor

Nothing keeps employees more alert and attentive than a sense of humor. The wise trainer realizes that 45 minutes of instruction and five minutes of laughter achieves much more than 50 minutes of straight instruction. Remember to keep the focus on humor that is not hurting anyone's feelings. Self-deprecating humor is usually safe, as are activities that allow trainees to relieve some stress and share laughter together.

Time to Train

Even the best trainer is likely to do a poor job if their schedule is already overburdened. Training includes time to prepare properly. Preparation may include a range of activities, from research and writing, to creating training materials and visual aids, to developing follow up plans and measurement tools.

Respect for and by Trainees

If the trainer is not respected by the trainees, for whatever reason, the trainees will gain minimal benefit from the training.

Enthusiasm for Training

If the trainer is enthusiastic as they undertake training activities, this is likely to carry over to the trainees themselves. Trainers can deliberately increase energy levels in training by altering their own demeanor and through focused activities. At the same time, a trainer's attitude and approach can also sap the training room of energy and create a negative experience.

Mistakes and Solutions

If they aren't very familiar with the training process, supervisors may delegate the training function to others. However, they may forget to provide help to make sure the chosen person can conduct the training well.

The assumption that anyone who can do a job can teach another person how to do it has led to countless errors in the instruction process. Many of us have been either a victim of or a witness to this misguided belief. A few of us may be even guilty of this assumption ourselves!

Some of the common mistakes made by supervisors and trainers include:

- Feeding too much or too little at one time
- Telling without demonstrating
- Lack of patience
- Lack of preparation
- Failure to build in feedback
- Failure to reduce tension

Stimulating a Readiness to Learn

Parents who have guided their children through the elementary grades are aware that children must be ready and interested before real learning can take place. Common sense tells us that if an employee is motivated to learn, the trainer's job will be much easier and training efforts will be more effective. To a large extent, motivation requires that an employee feels that the assigned job is an important one, offering significant benefit to the company.

How can we convey that message to an employee?

- If the job to be taught is menial, routine, and easily learned, the supervisor can stress accuracy and quality. Even the sweeper makes a contribution toward improving the quality of a workplace.
- People are our most valuable asset: tell them this, and then demonstrate it. A management-minded supervisor or trainer recognizes this and cultivates the employee's pride in the work to be done.

How to Facilitate Learning

- Repetition
- Arouse curiosity
- Provide support initially and remove it strategically as competency increases
- Careful use of competition
- Know the knacks
- Enthusiastic instruction
- Satisfaction in accomplishment

How to Inhibit Learning

Practical experience has taught many of us how we can slow down the learning process.

Fatigue

Be well rested yourself and find some way for people to occasionally get up and move around. If you suffer from poor sleep the night before training, make sure that you are creating a good environment to rest even if you cannot sleep. During training, give people breaks when they need them and have a handful of energizers ready for when energy lags.

Monotony

Vary the exercises, vary your participation, vary the seating, and vary your tone of voice.

Distractions

This is often an internal response to being away from the workplace. You can ask people to write out the problems they bring to the workshop with them, put them in an envelope, and not deal with them until the workshop is over.

Location is also key. The training room should ideally not be located handy to the workplace. You could also put a note on the door saying, "Do not disturb. Training in progress."

Remember to ask participants to turn off anything that is sending them messages through the day (cell phones, e-mail, etc.) or not bring them to the classroom if possible.

Anxiety

Make participants feel as comfortable as possible to ease the anxiety of performing under the pressure of a classroom setting. We will discuss some ways to do this later on in the course.

A Word about Adult Learning

Adults and children differ in learning styles and preferences. Effective training should complement the learning styles of both the trainer and the trainees, and so trainers must be certain to avoid treating their adult learners in the same way that they would teach children.

When we are teaching adults we must be aware of the characteristics of adult learners. Adults may think they are finished with classroom learning until they find there are still problems to solve, issues to explore, and many things to learn. In today's world, continuous learning is required, and organizations who make ongoing development of their employees a priority understand how important that learning is.

