

Types and importance of on the job training



In this chapter, different authors' view from different sources will be analyzed with relation to On-the-Job Training.

2. 0 Introduction

According to Peter Drucker (1999) ' the most valuable asset of a 21st-century institution, whether business or non-business, will be its knowledge workers and their productivity' and he further considered the human resource as being the lifeblood of any successful organization which as a result becomes of prime importance that such asset is cared and well managed. One way through which this can be done is training. Training of employees is an important factor if the organization wants to, obviously, achieves its objectives in an effective and efficient manner.

Training is defined by Armstrong (2001) as a formal and systematic adjustment of behavior through learning which occurs as a result of education, instruction, and development and planned experience. On his side, Noe (2002) view training as a planned effort by a company to facilitate employees' learning of job related competencies. Moreover, Bentley (1990, p. 25) stated that the role of training may be seen as ' ensuring that the organization has the people with the correct mix of attributes, through providing appropriate learning opportunities and motivating people to learn, and thus enabling them to perform to the highest level of quality and service.'

Lanciono et al. (2004) highlighted the fact that call centre Managers are concerned about the continuous improvement of employees' skill, since the products, technologies, and services that they handle are changing at a rapid pace and as a result call centres are often forced to provide employees

who service and sell their product with formal training and opportunities to upgrade their knowledge and skills.

2. 1 The effectiveness of training

Effective training program helps organization to achieve their objectives.

Drummond (1989) put forward the general objectives of training activities as being; orienting new employees to the organization and their job, helping employees perform their current jobs well, keeping employees informed of changes within the organization, and providing opportunities for personal development.

Sales and Cannon (2001) pointed out that both theory and practice have improved dramatically trainings' effectiveness. Kirckpatrick (1996) further affirmed that effectiveness is a concept that consists of four levels: satisfaction, learning results, job behavior and organizational benefits. The effectiveness of training is not only caused by training characteristics but is also influenced by the trainee's characteristics and organization's characteristics. The influence of the supervisor (and sometimes the influence of colleagues) on the effectiveness of training was evident in the work of Brinkerhoft and Montesino et al. (1995).

Furthermore, Tracey et al. (2001) asserted that for any training program to be considered as effective, trainees have to learn the training content and then apply such learning in the workplace; thus any training program can be conceptualized as being composed of training acquisition and transfer of training.

Walter (1998) further alleged that an effective and efficient on-the-job training program is vital for the development of highly skilled employees needed for business success. Jacobs (2003) lay emphasis that training is more effective when trainees possess the pre requisite knowledge, skills and readiness, including technical background, comfort with the use of tools and equipment, literacy, and previous work experience.

Effective training is vital to most call centres.

2. 2 Types of training

With reference to Dessler (2000) and Treven and Mulej (2000), the most popular training methods used by organizations can be categorized by either:

Off – the – job training, or,

On – the – job training.

Off the job training

Off – the – job training is defined by Rothwell and Kazanas (1994) as any type of training that is not performed on the job, that is, training which take place in a classroom and which is designed to train groups of trainees rather than individual. Besides, Lewis and Trevitt (1994) reported that off – the – job training offers learning opportunity through attendance at training fora away from the job or workplace.

There are several types of off – the – job training and De Cenzo and Robbins (1996) summarized them as follows:

Types

Description

1.

Classroom lectures

Lectures design to communicate specific interpersonal, technical or problem solving skills.

2.

Video and films

Using various media productions to demonstrate specialized skills that are not easily presented by other training methods.

3.

Simulation Exercise

Training that occurs by actually performing the work ; it may include case analysis, experiential exercise, role playing, or group decision making.

4.

Computer base training

Simulating the work environment by programming a computer to some of the realities of the job.

5.

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Vestibule training

Training on actual equipments used on the job, but conducted away from the actual work setting.

6.

Programmed Instruction

Condensing training materials into highly organized, logical sequences.

However, Jacobs (2003) pointed out that off the job training often do not have the desired relevance.

According to Smith and Smith (2008), in the Australian call centres, the Customer Service Representatives (CSR) undergo an initial off-the-job period of induction which covers the product knowledge required but focuses primarily on telephone techniques. During this session, the CSRs will typically role play telephone calls and listen in to live calls being taken by CSRs in the call centre.

2.3 Definition of On-the-job training (OJT)

Smith and Smith (2008) further elaborated that after the induction, the CSRs are placed out into the call centre usually with working with an experienced agent thus by gradually learning how to perform, or is being placed in a configured training teams that will not be subject to the same performance as live teams although the trainee will be working with actual customers. On the job training was claimed to be ‘ the most common, the most widely accepted and the most necessary method of training employees in the skills

essential for acceptance performance.’ (Tracey 1971, p. 30, reported by S. Jones 1988, p. 11). Levine (1997) simply stated that OJT is about ‘ two people working closely together so that one person can learn from the other.’

On his side, Campbell (1990) seen on the job training as the same as in an employee’s normal work situation, as being designed to change the knowledge, attitude and behavioral patterns directly appropriate to the performance of a given task or job.

In addition, Siele (1988) considered on the job training as an informal type of training given to employees at the work place, where the trainer plays the role of the immediate supervisor of the employees and its purpose is to improve the employee’s working skills, efficiency and productivity. Siele (1988) emphasized that on the job training supplements all other forms of training with the additional advantage of being provided to more people in any given year than it is possible at training institutions.

According to Jacobs and Jones (1995) and Rothwell and Kazanas (1994), OJT refers to a form of training that occurs at the workplace during the performance of a job rather than in a classroom setting. In addition, Jacobs and Jones (1995) and Rothwell and Kazanas (1994) asserted that this form of training is the most widely used method of delivering training for a novice employee by an experienced employee today and is one of the most important components of learning in the work place.

Types of on the job training

According to Jacobs (2003), OJT as a form of individualized training, can be designed and delivered using two basic approaches:

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Unstructured OJT

Structured OJT

According to various authors, the unstructured OJT is used frequently in most organizations whereas the structured OJT is the most recent application of OJT (Hamilton and Hamilton, 1997; Lawson, 1997; Levine, 1997; Filipczak, 1996; Rothwell and Kazanas, 1994)

Unstructured On-the-job training

Rothwell (1997) formulated a definition for unstructured OJT as an approach in which learners are thrown into the work and the training is based on daily work requirement rather than the learner/worker needs. Jacobs and Jones (1995) indicated that unstructured OJT occurs when trainees acquire job knowledge and skills from impromptu explanations or demonstrations but others, trial and error efforts, self-motivated reading, or simply by imitating the behavior of others. In addition, Rothwell and Kazanas (1994) acknowledged the fact that unstructured OJT are OJT that is not planned or logically organized; training and learning takes place by trainees performing the work or by watching others performing.

However, unstructured OJT is accompanied by loads of criticism. Levine (1997) argued that, as an unstructured system, no criteria are established for the quality of training, nor are records of the training maintained. Along with, Filipczak (1993, p. 30) added that unstructured OJT "...does not enforce common work standard. It does not ensure the trainee will perform the way the trainer says they should be done. It allows the trainee to pick up the trainer's bad habits along with his good ones." Filipczak (1993) reported that <https://assignbuster.com/types-and-importance-of-on-the-job-training/>

Martin Broadwell confirms that about ninety five percent of OJT is done so poorly that the job is negatively affected. Equally, several studies conducted by Jacobs and Jones (1995) conformed that unstructured OJT leads to increased error rates, lower productivity and decreased training efficiency.

On the whole, just as OJT experts (Hamilton and Hamilton et al., 1997) confirm that most of the OJT that takes place in businesses is unstructured, they agree that unstructured OJT is the least beneficial and least effective type of training. Johnson and Leach (2001) also supported the above statement viewing unstructured OJT as being often ineffective and inefficient as compared with structured OJT.

Structured On-the-Job Training

According to Stolovitch and Ngoa - Nguete (2001), structured OJT differs from unstructured OJT in that a systematic planning process is used to design and carry out the training. Lawson (1997) defined structured OJT as a training which is planned and well organized and a one on one program designed to provide the employee with the relevant knowledge and skills required to perform tasks entailed in the employee's job. Furthermore, Jacobs (2003) viewed structured OJT as a planned process of developing competence on units of work by having an experienced employee train a novice employee at the work setting or a location that closely resembles the work setting. Moreover, Baron (1997), acknowledged the fact that structured OJT provides the delivery of training in an organized, sequential manner, with the aim of becoming as efficient as possible. Also Chase (1997) contends the fact that structured OJT is inexpensive, quickly developed, takes place at the work site, and focuses on tasks that are directly related to the job.

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Equally important, Walter (1996) added that structured OJT can increase quality of training, employee morale, and communication as well as decision making along with employees who are trained in new skills very quickly.

Empirically, researchers have demonstrated that structured OJT has helped in making valuable contributions in terms of an increase in productivity of an organization. (Bennett and Calvin, 2002; Jacobs and Osman Gani, 1999; Stolovitch and Ngoa – Ngule 2001)

Jacobs and Jones (1995) stated that structured OJT has the following main points:

A planned process, structured OJT requires an investment of time and effort before it can be used. As a result, trainees should be able to learn the appropriate content and achieve the desired training objectives.

Structured OJT focuses on the task level of jobs and does not involve an entire job but rather just a small part of it.

Structured OJT should be delivered by an experienced employee with the qualifications to become a trainer, thus not every employee can necessarily become a trainer.

Structured OJT usually occurs at the job setting, although in some instances. It may occur near the job setting.

Many authors among which feature Jacobs (1999), Jacobs and Jones (1992), Jacobs and Gani (1998), Rothwell and Kazanas (1990), and Scribner and Sachs (1990) have detailed the benefits of structured OJT and these benefits include reduced overall learning time, reduced overall training costs, greater

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flexibility to the needs of the individual worker, positive relationship building between novices and experienced workers/ superiors, higher transfer rates than those cited for classroom and other formal training, and perhaps most importantly, heightened new-worker confidence.

There are, generally, two distinct features of structured OJT compared with classroom training:

Firstly, DeSimone and Harris (1998) claimed that a trainee has an immediate opportunity to use and practice what he or she has learned on the job and therefore a trainer can achieve learning objectives more efficiently.

Secondly, Jacobs (2003) affirmed that the transfer of learning is enhanced in structured OJT environment, especially in the match between the training setting and work setting; because the learning environment is the same as the work environment in structured OJT, a trainee is able to use the same equipments and tools that he or she is meant to use to perform his or her actual work.

Other studies (Jacobs 1996) have demonstrated the effectiveness and efficiency of using structured OJT compared with mainly off the job training and unstructured OJT in terms of financial benefits, high satisfaction rating, and fewer quality errors. In complement to, Burkett (2002) showed that employees who learn tasks through structured OJT make fewer quality errors. Moreover, Lawson (1997) put forward that structured OJT is based on adult learning theories and on how and why people learn. Below is a brief overview about what is adult learning about:

Adult learning

Malcolm Knowles (1978, 1990) was the theorist who first brought the concept of adult learning to a prominent position. Knowles (1990) contends that adults need to control their learning, as well as feel that what they learn has immediate utility, and is focused on issues that directly concern them; adults need to anticipate how they will use their learning, and to expect performance improvement to result from their learning. Knowles's (1998) work was among the most guiding one with its six principles of adult learning being summarized as follows:

Need to know – adults need to know why they should learn something, that is why they need to learn something and how it will benefit them.

Self concept – adults fight against others imposing their will on them, but having been conditioned through the national school system of a dependent learner, they need to be moved into a self directed learner where they are responsible for their own learning and the direction it takes.

Role of experience – adult's experience should be used in their new learning and the technique should include ways to include the adult's knowledge as a tool that they can draw upon and also provide engagement by acknowledging them for their experience.

Readiness to learn – adults seek out learning as a way to better cope with real life task and problems.

Orientation to learn – the new learning should clearly define how the new learning will apply to their life in some fashion.

Motivation to learn – internal motivators are important than the external motivators that adults may receive for more learning. These internal motivators can come in the form of increased job satisfaction, self esteem and quality of life.

In similar vein, Birkenholz (1999) asserted that adults with more education have a stronger tendency to participate in adult educational activities rather than those who have less education since as people expand their knowledge base, they also increase awareness of what they do not know.

The following table summarizes important characteristics of adult learners and the implications to call center training programs:

Adult learners:

Implications to call center training programs:

Want practical application

Develop task-centered and problem-centered training programs.

Want their real-life experiences to be recognized and valued

Use the learner's experiences and examples; develop interactive sessions.

Are continuous learners and prefer to manage their own learning efforts

Involve learners in development and evaluation of the program; encourage self-discovery and action planning.

Have varied learning styles

Use multimedia, varied methods of delivery, accelerated training methods.

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Need to know why they are learning

Inform learner of the “ why” behind the training before it begins

Are motivated most by internal pressures (themselves)

Help learners understand the benefits of training to job satisfaction, self-esteem and quality of life.

Source: “ What Every Trainer Needs to Know About How Agents Learn” by Laurie Solomon, published in Call Center Management Review , June 1999.

Structured OJT typologies

Generally there are four commonly used types of OJT among which features:

Job instruction training

Mentoring

Coaching

Job rotation

Job Instruction Training (JIT)

The JIT consists of four steps which were developed by Allen (1919) to train shipbuilders during World War I (Sleight, 1993). Rothwell and Kazanas (1994) outlined the four steps in the JIT model as follows:

Step1 Preparation – showing and demonstrating what learners will do;

Step 2 Presentation – telling learners what they will performed and why;

Step 3 Application – allowing the trainee the opportunity to practice the skills;

Step 4 Inspection – checking the trainee's work and providing feedback.

In addition to Rothwell and Kazanas (1994), Allen (1919) further described in his book that these steps should always be carried out in the order given and that the purpose of step 1 is to get the learner ready to be instructed of step 2 to instruct him of step 3 to check up errors and of step 4 to give a final inspection of the instruction job.

However, Ford (1970) argues that the four step model is no longer enough; thus he added two other components – objectives and evaluation – recognizing that these components are implied by most of the expositions of Job Instruction Training. The amended diagram can be illustrated as follows:

According to Ford (1970), the first step is the determination of objectives which describes what the learner will be doing when demonstrating his achievement and how one will know when he is doing it.

Even though evaluation is listed as the final step in the model though it is a continuous process. Ford (1970) laid much emphasis that throughout the learning situation, the instructor should reflect on and evaluate each element in terms of the objectives and also he further claimed that evaluation is usually thought of as evaluating the student which in fact is to evaluate the entire learning process as well as a self evaluation of the instructor himself.

Job rotation

DeSimone and Harris (1998) define job rotation as an activity that involves a series of assignment to different positions or departments for a specified period of time. Wood (1995) added that job rotation is the systematic movement of employees from job to job within an organization, as a way to achieve various different human resources objectives such as: orienting new employees, preventing job boredom or burnout, reward employees, enhancing career development as well as exposing employees to diverse environments.

According to Weihrich and Koontz (2002), the basic objective of job rotation is to broaden the actual knowledge of managers or potential managers who are made to move through:

Non supervisory work;

Observation assignment where they observe what other managers do rather than actually managing the portfolios;

Assistant positions in some cases for brief periods in case of unforeseen absences or vacations of other managers.

In line with the above statement, Anon (2001) stated that job rotation provides the employee with an opportunity to get a better understanding of the overall company and provide the organization with a more flexible workforce. Jerris (1999) added that excellent job rotation program can minimize training costs while optimizing the impact on training, by making

individual in a better position to be flexible, self-motivated, adaptable, innovative, eager to learn and able to communicate effectively.

According to Osborne (1996), at the start of job rotation, output may decrease temporarily implying that job rotation does not follow that job interest. DeSimone and Harris (1998) stated that within the job rotation training program, the trainee is evaluated by the trainer at each job, and at the end of training, the trainee's evaluation are used as a means to decide in which department or job the trainee will work.

Jerns (1999) argued that the possible problems with the job rotation program is that it is costly since job rotation involves a great amount of management time which is spend on lower level employees and it may also increase the work load, thus decreasing the productivity for the rotating employee's manager and for other employees.

Coaching

Smith and Smith (2008) stated that the activities of the trainers after the induction session largely consisted of on-the-job coaching. Harris (1997) described coaching as an informal, unplanned training and development activities provided by supervisors and peers. Albers (1974) views OJT similar as coaching thus defining it as a conscious creation of an environment within which subordinates can learn to become better executives. On his part, Oladunni (1998) added that coaching is those managerial actions and behaviors specifically that focused on developing an employee so that he or she can perform at maximum compatibility. Oladunni (1998) further stressed that coaching maximizes the contribution of both the trainer and the trainee

simultaneously and enables the coach to concentrate on other management functions.

According to Sullivan (1998) the role of the coach is to facilitate learning as well as guiding learners toward the acquisition of new knowledge or upgrade their skills and equally seeking to influence learner's attitudes by acting as a role model or mentor.

Mentoring

Mentoring, on the other hand takes a more holistic approach and guides the learner through broader aspects of the particular job (Cunningham et al. 2004)

Woods and Cortada (1998) view mentoring as a learning relationship in which an individual with knowledge shares that knowledge with his or her colleague. The mentor is usually a supervisor or manager and the intention of mentoring is to support the employees, help orientating them to the job and work environment and “ preparing the employee for increasing responsibility” (DeSimone and Harris, 1998, p. 145)

Brennan and Little (1996) described the process of mentoring as follows:

“ In the first instance the mentor will be more pro active, supportive and encouraging, but in time the learner develops independence, confidence and autonomy. The mentor then needs to become more critical, challenging and confrontational, encouraging reflection. Effective and lasting learning takes place when learner experience a balance of challenge and support, confrontation and encouragement.”

Hooling and Resta (2001) support mentorship as a means to improve trainers own professional competency and belief through learning opportunities from trainees in mentoring.

Components of a successful Structured OJT

Jacobs (2003) held that a system view of structured OJT represents the interaction of several components, such as the training input, training process, the training outputs, and the organizational context. There is no best way to do structured training but however it has been noted that there seem to be some common elements among successful structured system, Levine (1996) stated that the components below may have different significance in different organizations:

Management support

Levine (1995) maintained the fact that training takes time and that it requires supervisors to allow themselves enough time for preparation and training, with the aim of not thwarting any structured OJT effort; Levine (1995, pp. 1) further affirmed that “ If you cannot gain internal support from the organization’s managers and supervisors, don’t waste time trying to implement structured OJT.” Moreover, Levine (1995) stated that support may come in the form of supplies, funding, materials and recognition of trainers and trainees. On a similar vein, Cleveland and Harne (2003) pointed out that the effect of training in call centres must be understood by all levels of the organization’s senior management to ensure ongoing financial support.

Formal trainer support process

Levine (1995) emphasized that successful system generally have an OJT coordinator, a training manager, or some people outside the work area to provide the support necessary for a trainer; thus may include a dotted line relationship to the training organization. Jacobs (2003) further further put forward that organizations should be prepared to provide additional resources, such as appropriate rewards and incentives, necessary to support trainers in order to manage and develop trainers' performance over time.

Checklists and OJT training material

Checklists is defined by Levine (1994, p. 6) as being “ the foundation of any OJT system”. Levine (1997) further lay out that checklists add structure to the training process and they list the specific skills and the employee is ‘ checked off’ as each task is successfully performed.

Another document pointed out by Broadwell (1986) is the lesson plan which is intended to guide the training and improve the trainer's ability to instruct the trainee. Broadwell (1996) also noted that the lesson plan must include what the trainer will say, show, and do, what the trainee will be expected to do, a timeframe for training, and the job aids and resources that are used in training.

Train the trainer

Johnson and Leach (2001) advised that prospective trainers are expected to develop training related skills through a train the trainer course. According to Levine (1995), training of the OJT trainer is the key to successful implementation; and that the program should contain high impact activities

with the aim of changing trainer's behavior from telling to coaching, from demonstrating skills for trainees to performing them with them. Meyer and Marsick (2003) advocated that it is important that the design and delivery, such as conducting needs assessment, developing objectives, creating an agenda, developing instructional event, and evaluating learning outcomes, still need to be included as core components of any train the trainer program. What an effective trainer look like will further be elaborated in the next section.

Tracking and Report generation

The last component as mentioned by Levine (1996) is tracking and report generation which is an important element for managing the training process as well as for other business reason like the fulfillment of the ISO 9000 quality award and an effective tracking and report generation may also provide valuable information to the stakeholders as well as providing a means of accountability. Smith (1995) stated that it is important to document whether there is a substantial difference between the approaches in the knowledge and skills acquired during the training.

An effective trainer

Sullivan and Smith (1996) stated that one of the most important elements of OJT training is selecting and qualifying trainers, since according to Harris et al. (2000) the quality of training in the workplace depends to a considerable degree on workplace trainers. As pointed out by Johnson and Leach (2001), OJT supervisors tend to select trainers on the basis of their job experience. However, Walters (2003) argued that even though OJT trainers are subject

matter experts and more senior employees as such as they may possessed little competence in how to conduct an OJT program.

Johnson and Leach (2001) urge to use expert workers who possess three competencies as follows:

Technical competency: this competency is related to the extent to which the trainer possesses a high level of technical knowledge and skills in the area to be taught.

Professional competency: this competency has to do with knowledge and skills related to instructional areas including planning, delivery and evaluation of learning.

Personal competency: it refers to the personal and behavioral characteristics that influence the way trainers are perceived by others.

In supplement to, Jacobs (2003, p. 98) proposed two basic requirements that make OJT trainers more effective that is ‘ they should have adequate competence in the unit of work that comprises of the training, and they should have adequate competence about the training as trainer.’ Jacob and Jones (1995), on their side, outlined eight qualities to look for when selecting an OJT trainer. These are:

Qualities

Brief description

1.

Task knowledge and skills

The ability to perform the work behaviors at appropriate performance levels.

2.

Specialized training

Completion of specialized training in the area that will be the basis of the OJT program.

3.

Willingness to share their expertise

Interest in the development of others.

4.

Respect from peers

Perception by other employees that the trainer has task expertise, leadership abilities and general problem-solving skills

5.

Interpersonal skills

Ability to communicate clearly and comprehensively

6.

Literacy skills

Ability to comprehend resource materials

7.

Concern for the organization

Showing an interest in helping the organization improve its performance

8.

Job expectations

Awareness of job expectations and assignments and how these will affect their ability to perform as an OJT trainer

In the call centre environment, Akroyd et al. (2006) acknowledged that the supervisor plays an important role, and Therkelsen and Fiebich (2003) argued that a supervisor's communication skills are of great importance and that these skills should be a meaningful part of the evaluation process.

Strengths and weaknesses of OJT

Jacobs (2003) stated that every training program contains its own strengths and weaknesses.