

Developing a culture of learning and development in the workplace



Week Five Assignment: Training and Development

In Week Five, we explored the elements that usually make up a learning organization and how this concept allows for a culture of ongoing learning and development, instead of only focusing on these aspects of organizational development during pre-set training periods. The Sprouts video on the topic defines a learning organization as a place that “ encourages personal mastery and cultivates open feedback to see problems and opportunities on all levels”, and lays out six characteristics that most of these organizations share:

- 1) They cherish an open culture
- 2) They design and implement feedback loops
- 3) They promote personal mastery
- 4) They plan for intelligent fast failure
- 5) They steal best practices from other organizations
- 6) They cultivate a common vision

(Sprouts, 2017)

Promoting continuous learning within an organization allows for individuals to grow and enables them to transition to other roles in the company, as well as establishing a pool of potential leadership candidates for succession planning (Bellon, 2019). Additionally, employee learning can be supported through job mastery (“ refining the skills required to perform that individual’s

role well and with [more] ease”); professional development (“ building on existing skill sets with new knowledge and skills that can benefit the current role and can also extend to new position possibilities”); and career development (comprised of both job mastery and professional development, “ along with ongoing career planning activities”) (Bellon, 2019).

Since training and development are an investment, strategic human resources will optimize these learning experiences for both employees as individuals and for the company as a whole (Bellon, 2019). With the steady advance of technology, there are so many different platforms from which employers and employees can choose to learn and develop themselves- this online course is just one of many examples of a form of ongoing learning for professionals who often are already actively engaged in full-time careers while earning a postgraduate degree.

For each employee as an individual, it’s critical to ensure that any learning content and structure is relevant and motivates them to continue to learn, especially when the training and education one might receive at the beginning of their careers or their tenure with a company may become obsolete over time. Paige Schaefer offers five guiding tips to help with creating a program that optimizes employee retention:

- 1) Divide information and content into smaller chunks that can be consumed one by one
- 2) Test early and often
- 3) Make your content interactive

- 4) Tell a story using concepts and ideas that should be retained
- 5) Make your content accessible for easy review

(Schaefer, 2014).

Because of how many different ways training can be approached, there needs to be some consistent strategy that is threaded through an organization's plan for training. This will allow the the plan to effectively get from Point A to Point B, and it's critical that both of these points (and everything in between) is clearly laid out and agreed upon beforehand. Any planning process should involve " clearly articulated outcomes...guiding principles that support the inherent values of the organization...the impact on the organization's mission and operations...a needs assessment [of the current state of training]...measurement/sustainability...end-user input... [and] performance measures", among others (Gerzon, 2011). Including such elements indicates that there is a strategic alignment with the organization's vision and mission, allowing that to flow through any effort to further develop employees and position them appropriately for the future. While strategy can lay the foundation and structure for top-notch trainers and the content and experiences they create, " it is the combination of strategy with inspired instruction and dedicated participation that is most like to genuinely satisfy the outcomes" that are desired by the organization (Gerzon, 2011).

Since my company does not currently have training and development opportunities for office employees, and does not offer any development opportunities for front-line staff after they have received their initial orientation and on-site training, I would like to envision a process that allows <https://assignbuster.com/developing-a-culture-of-learning-and-development-in-the-workplace/>

for opportunities like these. I would want to incorporate steps of the process and ideas from Jeannette Gerzon's "What Makes An Organization's Training Plan Strategic?" as well as Workable's template for a company's Employee Training & Development Policy. The process of developing these programs would occur at the corporate office in Albany, at branch offices across New York and Vermont, and at the accounts that Janitronics services. Planning and Feedback meetings could also occur over Skype for Business, which the company already uses for meetings involving multiple branches. The following groups would need to be involved in the process: the executive team; the recruitment, training, & HR teams; regional managers; compliance specialists; multi-site supervisors; and of course, employees themselves. The timeline for this process would be determined during the assessment of exactly what training and development opportunities should be offered, and who should be attending them. In order to make any sort of training and development program worth investing in, a "current state assessment" should be conducted, utilizing feedback from front-line employees and their trainers who have already established a relationship of trainer and trainee. Gerzon (2011) points out that "just-in-time" training can be given at the same time as long-term planning is occurring. The needs assessment will determine which needs are more immediate and appropriate for this kind of training, and which are better suited to be addressed as part of a big-picture initiative to ensure that employees remain engaged, current, and educated about best practices for their field. Once the needs assessment has been completed, "clearly articulated outcomes" should be clearly spelled out and then decided upon based on widespread support (Gerzon, 2011). The end-goal should be able to be understood by both internal and external

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stakeholders to ensure that it is focused, simple, and clear. Next, guiding principles for the process and the potential impacts that the strategic plan may have on the organization's overall mission and day-to-day operations should be clearly spelled out and explored by the executive team and feedback from regional managers who oversee executive decisions for their branches (Gerzon, 2011). Ultimately, any trainings or investments in career and professional development for employees will be aimed at improving performance. Therefore, performance measures in the organization should be tied to the measures of the training- even if the training ended up not being helpful or relevant for the employee, it should be made clear to all employees when they begin to work for the company that the onus of responsibility is on them to communicate with their supervisors that they were not able to apply the training to their position. This could be due to the lack of relevance or poor training design, but if the employee understands up front that their performance will be measured in part by how well they apply trainings to what is expected of them in their positions, they may be more inclined to communicate with supervisors if they felt they weren't given an opportunity to meet or exceed the company's expectations in this area (Gerzon, 2011). Finally, the methods for measurement and sustainability, as well how the feedback loop for end-user input will look and operate, should be determined and shared with end-users and stakeholders. During the entirety of this process, the executive team will be responsible for creating an Employee Training and Development policy that will apply to all future procedures and processes related to trainings and development opportunities. Workable's template for a policy like this includes sections on the purpose and scope of the policy; the definition of what the company

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means when they say “ training and development”; individual and corporate training programs; and the procedures for when employees want to attend an external training session or conference (Workable, 2017). The website encourages template users to tailor and customize this document to their company’s and employee’s needs, as well as taking local and state laws into consideration. Creating this document will ensure that all of the work that is being put into creating strategic programs for the company is encapsulated in a policy that HR and employees can use as a reference point moving forward.

The initiative to create a strategic training and development program in and of itself can lead to more trust in and respect for the executive team and company leaders, since it can show a desire to put words and promises into actions that will change how the company continues to invest in their human capital. Some immediately recognizable and easy-to-measure outcomes of a successfully implemented program may include improved customer experiences and retention rates, decreased employee turnover, and increased motivation and engagement in day-to-day activities and tasks. Employees’ self-confidence and sense of pride in their work may increase as well, since they feel they have a network of support even after they’ve been oriented to the company and have given the organization months or years of commitment. In the long-term, these programs could enable employees (and supervisors) to have a more future-oriented, systems-based perspective instilled in them, which would be demonstrated by their ability to pass on short-term benefits in favor of long-term outcomes that benefit the entire company, and thus the employees themselves. With a successfully

implemented program, these outcomes would be complimented by more efficient processes that result in financial gains for the company, the “increased capacity to adopt new technologies and methods”, better strategies and products as a result of increased innovation, enhanced company image (which is critical in a smaller, more rural market like Vermont), and risk management (McNamara, n. d.)

Moving forward, this week’s lessons have enabled me to clarify and better articulate some of the frustrations I have had with training programs that I have attended and have given myself. I think that better understanding what exactly I dislike about a training (or what I have no use for in my day-to-day operations) can lead to better structured and well-planned trainings and programs in the future. This is why I really like the idea of going through a needs assessment before starting any new process, and allowing for continuous feedback loops to ensure that the end users are always providing feedback and guidance. There’s simply not enough time for trainings that don’t align with the company’s objectives and the end-user’s job tasks, so I would always want to explore the needs of the company and my employees before jumping on something that seems “trendy” or current in other companies or amongst my HR colleagues. As for development opportunities, I’ve always thought that these are a no-brainer for companies to invest in. Education and certifications are becoming requirements, not “nice-to-haves” in many professional settings, and even in many labor-based trades. Right now my company only invests in giving leaders in office environments (such as sales and recruitment managers) the opportunity to earn an industry-specific credential. While this is important and shows that the company

wants to ensure that their employees obtain credentials that are respected in their industry, it doesn't give as much incentive for someone like myself to stay with the company for longer than a few years, because I don't plan on becoming a certified building services manager. If the company agreed to help reimburse me for this degree or an HRCI certification, for example, it would incentivize me to stay with their company long-term, since it shows me that they are willing to take a risk on me and invest in my professional development. Offering development opportunities like this is becoming standard practice for larger companies with more revenue to allocate for programs like these, and my hope is that smaller business like the one I currently work for will be able to keep up and retain employees by at least conducting a cost-benefit analysis for such programs, or at the very least allowing employees to attend meetings for professional development organizations (like SHRM, for example) to show that they encourage and support employees' improving their skills and their knowledge in their respective fields that provide operational support for the company.

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