

White Paper

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Training in the Workplace: A Better Way

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Training in the Workplace: A Better Way



In every single organization, people have to learn how to do their jobs. This is a universal truth. People are rarely hired who already have 100% of the knowledge and skills necessary to complete the work for which they will be held accountable. If nothing else, they must learn the company culture, where resources are located, and who the people are with whom they need to collaborate to be successful.

What is not universal is how companies approach employee training. These methods range from a complete lack of training (which is identified as a method because this is an intentional choice) all the way to the BEST organizations, as identified by the American Society for Training and Development, that spend upwards of \$1,600 per employee on training per year, or 6.61% of profit on organizational learning. To identify which methods *your* organization has adopted to train its employees, consider the following approaches:

Survival First: This is the belief that training takes too much time away from the day-to-day operations of the company, and if anyone stopped doing their job to be trained, the very survival of the company would be in jeopardy.

Sink or Swim: Usually found hand-in-hand with the Survival First approach, this is the process by which new employees, or those transferred to different positions, must discover the structures and systems to accomplish their work completely on their own.

Same Boat: This is the scenario in which the organization assigns a mentor or buddy among the employee’s peers to show the new employee the ropes.

Supervisor Shuffle: When it is left up to the supervisor to do all the training of an employee. If you have a good supervisor, then you may get the coaching and learning opportunities needed. If you have a poor supervisor, then you don’t. It’s a gamble.

Shields Up: When a company provides the training required by law (OSHA, CPR, and other safety, certification and licensure instruction), but no more.

Senior Special: The company executives get to go to conferences, often out of state, and sometimes for several days at a time, but the organization spends absolutely no money on any other employee training. Often these company leaders see training as an opportunity for R&R (rest & relaxation), not as actual learning opportunities.

Stimulus & Response: In this situation, company leaders react to something that has happened in the organization – usually something that is negative – and insists on putting employees through specific training classes to “fix” the problem.

Soup of the Day: This is another reactionary process, but in this one, the leadership orders employee training based on trends in the industry or business world.

Spaghetti Test: In these organizations, a variety of training sessions are designed and/or brought in. Those sessions that the employees enjoy are the ones that “stick to the refrigerator,” and are offered again.

Shotgun: These organizations often provide training on a variety of topics and for a variety of reasons (see the other approaches above). These sessions are usually selected by one individual, such as a training director or human resources manager, and are chosen based on his/her individual perspective on what is needed in the organization. The training offered may improve performance, or it may not. Either way, the results aren't measured so it is impossible to tell.

Status Quo: There is a training program of some kind in place, and it is the same program that has been offered for a long, long time. This comes from the mindset of “if it ain't broke, don't fix it.”

It is important to point out that many of these approaches are not necessarily bad approaches. For example, having a peer help train an employee and ensuring that the safety training required by law takes place are terrific options for an employee training program. However, it is when they are the only approaches within an organization that any positive impact is severely restricted.

Do any of these approaches to employee training sound uncomfortably familiar? Can you see one or more of these methods in action today in your company? If so, please read on because there **is** an alternative.

The most effective employee training programs contain three significant characteristics. They are **Systematic**, which means that the programs are created in a thoughtful, proactive manner; they are aligned with the organization's goals, mission, vision and values; and that the training supports employees at all levels of longevity and promotion. Effective training programs are **Systemic**, which means that they are supported and promoted by the organization's leadership; and due to clearly written designs and processes, they will exist beyond the individuals who are running them. Finally, effective training programs are **Sustainable**, which means that the people who are implementing them are doing so with structures and systems in place that ensure they will be continually evaluated and improved over time, as well as a mindset that the purpose of the training is to make long-term, positive changes in the company.

The best way to develop training programs that are systemic, systematic and sustainable is to utilize an instructional systems design (ISD) model. There are many models out there. A few approaches include Gagne's Nine Events of Instruction, the Dick and Carey Systems Approach to Instructional Design, Seels and Glasgow ISD Model II, and the Smith and Ragan Systematic Instructional Design Model. However, the one ISD model that is promoted by the American Society for Training and Development is known as the ADDIE model. ADDIE stands for Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement and Evaluate. These steps are self-explanatory, and many training specialists across the country utilize this approach because it is so user-friendly. (See the Rising Sun White Paper titled: “[A.D.D.I.E.: A Proactive Approach to Employee Training & Development](#)” for complete description of the ADDIE Model.)

Developing quality training programs that are systemic, systematic and sustainable does take time and thoughtful planning. In order for them to be truly successful, they must be supported by the leaders in the organization. It is the leadership who would set the expectation of the company being a learning organization, and also would ensure that the resources are available. So, if you recognize any of the potentially damaging training approaches mentioned above in place in your organization and you want to make positive changes so that your training approach is systemic, systematic and sustainable, then take the first step by starting at the top. Demonstrate to the leadership how your current approach(es) to training could be sabotaging the success and culture of the organization, and then propose a better way.