

## TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

### The relevance of training and development to business

If employees are to contribute to business success they need to have the right skills and competencies for the job. When recruiting new employees, employers will try to ensure that, as far as possible, employees already have the skills they need. However, this will not always be possible and business needs are also likely to change so that even the most skilled and qualified employee is likely to need to develop new skills or upgrade their existing skills during the course of their employment in order to meet new challenges and take on new responsibilities. Training, learning and development activities can help to improve performance, strengthen skills and motivate employees.

Regular performance reviews should provide a means to proactively identify development needs of employees. See Section 14 for more information on performance reviews. Once needs are identified, a plan should be prepared to ensure that those needs are met and that any development activities genuinely deliver results which can be measured against business objectives. The plan should ensure that all employees have access to development opportunities.

In order to make sure that time and money spent on development activities is a good investment it makes sense to follow a structured approach.

The steps involved in providing effective development for employees are outlined below.

Following these steps can help ensure that training and development plans will deliver the results that the company needs in order to meet its business objectives and priorities.

#### 1. Identify Needs

The learning needs of your people can be defined as falling under one or more of the following:

- Company;
- Team;
- Individual.

At Company level you may identify that all employees need, for example, specific training in health and safety to meet legislative requirements and appropriate equal opportunities and anti-harassment training.

At Team level a team may need to develop knowledge or understanding of how to follow a procedure or process e.g. credit control.

At Individual level an employee may need development in supervisory skills.

**All identified needs should have as their starting point a link to the company's business objectives and priorities.**

When determining whether training and development needs exist it can be helpful to consider both **The Present** and **The Future**.

#### The Present

Consider whether there are performance shortfalls and whether the provision of training and development opportunities is the best way of addressing these. Performance reviews, staff surveys and company reviews can provide useful information on the present situation.

Identify and define the problem(s), focusing on past performance by analysing issues such as:

- quality standards;
- productivity levels;
- accident rates;
- absenteeism;
- customer complaints;
- staff turnover.

#### The Future

Consider the company's future direction and the implications for training and development. Focus on:

- **Business strategy:** do changes in the business strategy require new skills?
- **Manpower and succession planning:** will identified successors need training and development to become proficient in their new role?
- **New technology, products or services:** is the company planning any innovations which will require training and development?
- **New legislation (e.g. Health and Safety or legal requirements):** is the company likely to be affected by changes in legislation in relation to mandatory training?

The list of questions in Appendix 15A can be used to prompt your thinking and help identify possible training and development needs.

### 2. Plan how to meet the needs identified

We need to be very sure whether the need can be met with a learning and development solution (the requirement may be for resources or systems), then to set clear learning objectives and choose the most effective learning solution. It is also important to ensure that all employees have equal access to learning and development opportunities.

If it is a learning and development issue, it can be helpful to record the needs identified in a Development Plan such as that shown in Appendix 15B.

In completing the plan, whether at Company, Team or Individual levels, be very specific in defining requirements by considering the following issues.

#### Method/Solution

It is easy to fall into the trap of jumping to standard solutions, especially to training courses. However, there are many different ways for employees to develop new skills and knowledge and training courses may not be the most effective solution. Be aware of the wide range of development methods available, and their respective costs and benefits. While the tendency is to think of courses, either open or tailored, sometimes other development methods are more effective and do not have the same direct costs. Consideration could be given to using some or all of the following as appropriate in response to identified needs:

- job shadowing of a colleague;
- mentoring by a senior manager or a peer;
- coaching by a manager/supervisor;
- internal sessions where employees can share their expertise;
- secondment to another part of the company;
- secondments to other organisations if feasible;
- job rotation;
- reading selected material;
- training courses, including online training courses;
- sharing information and resources e.g. books, articles, useful websites;
- involvement in challenging projects;
- attending meetings;
- visits to other companies.

#### Responsibility for implementation

Ensure that everyone understands who is responsible for implementing the solution.

#### Target Group for Training Courses

If the solution is a training course, be clear about who needs the training. The benefits should outweigh the costs and this includes hidden costs such as team members' time, loss in productivity and the knock-on implications e.g. cover arrangements. So, be very specific and carefully select the individuals to be trained. Decisions on who will receive training should be fair and not based on any prohibited discrimination grounds (see Section 1 for list of grounds).

#### Business Outcome

Be clear about what the development activity should achieve, for individuals, teams and the company. Try to focus as much as possible on tangible results.

#### Costs and Resources required

Determine the costs of providing the training and development activities, rough estimates at this stage, against the budget. It may be necessary to change the preferred delivery method in the light of the costs identified.

#### Priority/Required by

Specifying a date will provide a focus to help ensure delivery.

### 3. Implement the solution

#### The role of Line Managers

When considering how best to implement the planned solution it is important that line managers are involved in helping to define the most appropriate development method, providing support and encouragement, measuring and managing performance and evaluating the outcomes in terms of performance improvement and lessons learnt for the future.

#### Training providers

If the solution is a training course, it is important to ensure that the training to be provided is an effective method of meeting the needs identified. If the course is an open course available to people from any organisation, ensure that you check the credentials of the provider and the course objectives before arranging for any employees to attend.

If a number of employees require training on a particular issue, and this cannot be provided by anyone in the company, it may be worthwhile engaging an external training provider who can deliver training either in-company or off-site.

## SECTION 15

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There are many providers of training services ranging from one-off training consultants, to training organisations to colleges and universities and it is important to choose the most appropriate to your company needs.

There is no simple formula for choosing providers but as a minimum:

- ask them to define the outputs/outcomes which will result from the training that you want them to provide i.e. what will people know and be able to do after the training;
- ask them to provide references from other organisations where they have delivered training;
- specify, where appropriate, that they have recognised professional and/or national qualifications;
- talk to other organisations you know have used the provider.

It is important to remember that any intervention to improve an employee's skill or knowledge is only the starting point. There is a difference between learning and knowing and a difference between knowing and doing. The ultimate objective is to improve the employee's performance on the job and so it is important to follow through and ensure that any learning is actually implemented. This is where the line manager's role is critical – although part of this role will be to encourage the employee to take responsibility for following through on what they have learnt and that they put the learning into practice as soon as possible.

#### **4. Evaluate the development activity**

Evaluating how effective training and development actions have been is critical for an organisation. For example:

- At company, team and individual levels, has the investment in time, money and resources in training produced the required performance improvement?
- Were the methods used cost effective?
- Were the providers effective (if applicable)?
- What can be learned to improve any future training activities?
- Were the right people involved in supporting the development activity? For example, was there effective support from managers?

You might want to gain some kind of understanding of the value of the training, whether it is quantitative or qualitative (or indeed both). Sometimes it will be necessary to attempt to demonstrate a tangible financial benefit or an impact on business results and at other times it will suffice to establish that the trainees benefited from it and that changes in attitude and behaviour occurred. In either case, it is essential to ensure that the evaluation process is not so cumbersome that it becomes an end in itself. The key to effective evaluation is to keep it simple.

When planning a training programme or intervention, consider carefully at the outset whether it is worth investing the time and effort in trying to pin down evidence of the benefits/outcomes at every level. Your decision should be based on the type of intervention, its intended objectives/ outcomes and those people involved.

### COMPANY TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

#### Company Background, Business Strategy and Objectives

How long has the business been established?  
What are the company's strategy and objectives for the future? Short, medium and long term?  
How big a threat are your competitors?  
What have been your successes to date? What can be replicated?  
What are the current and future key challenges / risks for the business? How will you manage any risks?  
What are the opportunities for the future?  
What plans do you have to maintain / increase sales over the next 3 years?  
Who are the key personnel in the business? Do you have succession plans in place?

#### Markets, Products and Services

What are your organisation's main markets? Do you intend to enter new markets over the next 3 years?  
What are your main products and services?  
Are you planning to introduce new products? What are the implications and potential training requirements?  
How do you develop new products/services?  
Who is responsible for sales and marketing?  
What are your routes to market - how do you sell?  
Who are your main customers?  
How is customer feedback gathered?  
Do you use a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system? Does this require any additional skills?

#### Operations

Are you working to full capacity?  
What cost reduction areas have you identified over the next 2 years?  
Do you have any bottlenecks in your company / processes?  
How are suppliers managed to ensure you are getting the right level of service?  
How do you manage waste / scrappage?  
What technology do you use and how might this change your production / service e.g. new machinery, automated programmes?  
Would changes require additional people to carry out different tasks or impact on how they are supervised or managed? Is multi-skilling required?  
What financial management system do you use and is it effective?

#### Structure and People

What is the structure of the business? Ratio of management / direct employees?  
Is communication within the company effective or is it generally on a 'need to know' basis?  
Are there regular management meetings / team briefings?  
Are there any vacancies or issues surrounding recruitment and/or retention of staff?  
How do you measure people's performance?  
Are there any individual / team performance issues?  
How are managers developed?

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

What are the Development Needs?	Target Group	Business Outcome	Method/ Solution	Costs and Resources Required	Priority/ Required By