

7 Ways to Get the Most Out Of Your Training Dollars In-House or Outsourced

Training often results when management is faced with a problem to solve. The organization has either failed to meet a goal or management wants to take advantage of a new opportunity. The other common reason for training is to prepare employees for a new position.

You can do several things as a “buyer” of training that will increase the chances for success. They involve deciding what you want from the training and how you will measure its achievement, and communicating that to the person or organization that will develop and deliver the training.

Needs Analysis.

Before you start defining the training, first ask, “Is training the right way to solve my problem?” Training is often the first thing thought of as the solution to almost any problem but other methods might be better. Other possibilities may be one-on-one coaching, counseling, different or improved tools, procedural changes, etc. A needs analysis may need to be done to define the best solution.

1) Be Sure You Know What Your Goals Are for the Training.

Once you’re sure training is the most effective solution, the first thing you should decide is the goal of the training. Goals are the skills, knowledge or attitude that the trainees must gain to satisfy some stated need. They focus on what the trainee should be able to do once they’ve successfully completed the instruction. They also form the basis for the rest of the development of the training.

What do you want the learners to be able to do when they have completed the instruction?

What do you want the trainees to do once they’ve completed the training. Do you want a change in behavior, in attitude, in the way a particular job is done? Do you want to change an attitude? Add new skills? Increase knowledge?

Do you want them to be more courteous to customers? To be able to use a new tool or measuring

instrument? To become qualified to perform a new job?

Example Goal

An example of a goal is: Collect and evaluate vibration information to reduce machine downtime.

Where to find your goals

The goals may come from a provided list of goals, a needs assessment, practical experience by incumbents in the job, job analysis, expert advice or other requirements or sources.

2) Know what new skills and knowledge the trainees should gain

Make a list of the objectives or competencies that the trainees should achieve

These are the actual specifics of what the trainee should gain. They may be systematic instructions telling how to perform the job. They describe what and how the trainee should be doing when the goal is met.

The objectives form the basis for the detailed development of the course and must support the goal. There may be sub-objectives that support higher objectives. These may cover prerequisite material, supporting skills, etc.

The person doing the instruction design and/or delivery may be able to help here. They probably have had experience translating goals into specifics.

Example Objective

An example of an objective is the following: Review trends in vibration level to identify potential problems.

What are the trainees' current skills, knowledge and attitudes?

What are their present skills, knowledge, and attitudes? For the training to be successful, the trainee must have the background to understand the training. If the instruction will involve working with calculations, does the trainee have the math skills necessary? Is knowledge of product or service production or delivery needed?

If the trainee does not have those skills, you may need a prerequisite course first if only a few of the trainees need help. Or training in the skills can be included in the instruction if most of the trainees need it.

In what setting will they use the learned skills and knowledge?

Think about the setting where the trainees will use the learned material. Will they be face-to-face with customers? Will they have reference material available or are they expected to remember the material?

How does this effect what they need to learn?

3) Know how you want to measure the effectiveness of the training.

You probably will want some measure of the effectiveness of the

training in meeting your goal. You can evaluate the trainees to see how much they gained, the trainers to see how well they were able to deliver the material, and the training material itself to see if it covered the subject adequately.

Trainees

The trainees are usually evaluated by some kind of test or evaluation at the end of the training. A pass/fail type test is normally all that is required to tell if the trainee met the goal. Observation on the job after training provides further assessment.

Trainer

The trainer can be evaluated by using pre-tests and post-tests. By comparing the trainees' abilities before and after training, the increase due to training can be measured. This is useful if you must provide an evaluation of the trainer or in deciding to use them in future projects.

Material

The material covered is a little harder to measure. The best way but slower is to measure the attainment of the goal of the training. An expert in the area can also evaluate the materials independently of the training designer and trainer.

Decide if you want tests.

Tests provide a written record of achievement if they are done right. They should be based on the goal and the objectives of the course.

Tests may take several forms. Written tests are most common and are effective for knowledge type material. Practical tests are used to evaluate skills. Roll play type tests assess attitude. Oral tests or boards work well when a wide range of skills, knowledge and attitude must be evaluated.

4) Decide the Instructional setting

Where will the training take place? Options include the classroom, in a hands-on setting, on the job site, in front of a computer or as self-study. It may be on-site or off-site. Will travel and lodging be required?

When will the training occur? Will it be during normal work hours? What shifts? Will it be after hours using overtime or on the trainees' own time? During what hours will the class be held? Decide if the training should be during or outside normal working hours

Decide if homework can be used

Will the trainees be required to do homework? Types of homework that may be assigned are reading, problems sets, or projects. Will the trainees be provided time during working hours to do homework or will it be on their own time? If projects are assigned, can the trainees use company information and materials in the project? Who will own the project after it's completed?

5) What deliverables do you want?

Instructional materials

Deliverable materials may include an Instructor's Guide, Trainee's Manual, presentation materials, job aids and tests. If you plan to conduct the training later using in-house resources, you probably want these. They will usually cost you extra.

Is the training to be lecture, hands on or both?

Adults usually learn best by doing. Do you want the training to be primarily lecture or hands-on? Will On the Job Training (OJT) be an effective method or should a combination be used?

Who will administer the Tests

Normally the trainer administers tests. But, depending on requirements (ANSI, etc.), you may want them administered by someone from your organization or an outside testing agency.

Follow-up

Most people don't do a formal follow-up evaluation after the training. I recommend that you do. Studies have shown that people forget 80% of what they learned within 3 days. But if they are refreshed, they retain 70%. It can be very useful, especially for training that is repeated. It does two things: 1) it provides material to revise the training for the next time and 2)

gives you a chance to correct any problems that may have come up.

You can do the follow up or you can have the trainer do it.

6) What are the logistics

Items the trainer will need to know include the logistics of the training. Do you have a classroom? Is it suitable for the training or should you find a better location? Are there sufficient materials, tools and equipment available for hands-on work?

What is required for the trainer to gain access to the site? Are there special Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements?

7) Make sure the provider understands and delivers on the above.

Your final task is to make sure the organization doing the training and the trainer has a good grasp of what you want and delivers on that. Expect them to ask exhaustive questions to clarify the goal and the objectives.

They should suggest testing strategies that evaluate both the trainees and the training. And finally, they should offer some sort of guarantee for their work.