

Owning Better End Results

Determine your company's training needs with a job task analysis

BY PRESTON INGALLS

It is a constant struggle to provide training for employees. To address this, managers must place training in the proper perspective. The old adage is appropriate here: "What if we train them and they leave?" Worse yet, what if you don't train them, and they stay? Another though to consider: If you think training is expensive, try ignorance. The Gallup Polling organization developed 12 questions often

used in surveys to find out the engagement and satisfaction of employees, which yielded Gallup's Q12 survey.

The survey results offer insight from more than 25 million employees across 189 countries. Engagement extends beyond an assessment of the happiness of employees. It also reveals whether that happiness demonstrates itself in superior performance on the jobsite.

Although multiple factors affect the degree of engagement and satisfaction of employees, several of the questions deal with training and development.

In other words, an investment in the employee's development not only ensures a more competent and confident employee, it shows him/her that the company is concerned with their development and growth. This affects his/her level of



engagement and overall motivation. In order to develop the best targeted training, you need to find out exactly what training your people need. If you want them to perform well, what tasks are you requiring them to perform? The best way to do that is to identify the tasks they are responsible for performing and determining how well they can perform them.

So, how do you identify those needs for multiple people in a department or division? A skills assessment called a job task analysis (JTA), also referred to as a job analysis (JA), has been around for many years. JTAs help to:

- Define and describe the tasks that the person will perform
- Determine the gap between what they are able and unable to perform
- Specify the skills needed to accurately perform the tasks
- Identify the tools and equipment the person needs to operate or use

A JTA identifies specific job tasks with the associated competencies. The tasks are organized by specific areas and then rated by importance.

The JTA is the most widely accepted process for determining valid job content and employment requirements. JTA establishes the basis for job descriptions, training courses, promotions, compensation levels and new employee direction. Training-related applications of a JTA include:

- Selecting appropriate learning outcomes for instructional development
- Prioritizing and sequencing tasks
- Identifying the steps within each task and the correct method to present them
- Determining instructional tactics that facilitate learning
- Selecting appropriate media and learning environments
- Developing performance assessments, tests and evaluation

Several methods exist that may be used individually or in combination, such as: job

location, complexity of the job, number of jobs and geographic restrictions. These methods include: Delphi method, expert panels, task inventories, observation by experts, surveys, close-ended and open-ended questionnaires, check lists and incumbent interviews.

If we examine the last one, incumbent interviews, a typical method of JTA would be to give the job incumbents or subject matter experts (SMEs) a simple questionnaire to identify duties, tasks and responsibilities. A JTA breaks a job down into a hierarchy of elements.

One method of creating a JTA is to use a panel of incumbents and then have it validated by supervisors.

Another method is to have the supervisors develop the tasks list and have it validated by the incumbents, in other words, switching the order of the JTA.

The advantage to the latter method is that the supervisors are often much more aware of what the employee is supposed to be doing while the employee may not list all those tasks. Through brainstorming and consensus building, the team develops a sequential list of tasks.

Following this process, the team determines which tasks should be trained. A facilitator educates the group or panel over a series of multihour sessions until the group feels the tasks are completely identified. Next, the group rates task frequency, consequence and difficulty on a five-point scale. These numbers are then

multiplied to produce a "Criticality Factor."

A draft of the identified job duties, tasks and responsibilities would be reviewed with the supervisor for accuracy. The list should always be validated by others who are knowledgeable about the tasks but not members of the panel.

Remember, not all job tasks are of equal value. Each task would be identified by how critical and essential it is to the supervisor(s). A particular task may either be so infrequently performed, or of such low importance that it is not reasonable to consider it "critical and essential."

The next step would be to develop a survey and have all those performing the job rate their skills on each task. Their supervisor would then perform the same skill rating on each employee independently.

The two surveys (self and supervisor) are compared and needs/gaps are identified. Once the gaps are identified, the "Importance Factor" (Frequency x Consequence x Difficulty) would be used to determine the order of training.

Additional elements to add would be: equipment and tools needed to perform, skills and knowledge for each task and work conditions. The following are tips for an effective JTA:

1. Start each task with an action verb. It should be a resulting action that is measurable and observable.
2. Follow each action verb with an object. The object is the target or recipient of the action.

A job task analysis establishes the basis for job descriptions, training courses, promotions, compensation levels and new employee direction.

3. Don't list tasks that overlap. Tasks should be clearly separated.
4. Use brainstorming to identify tasks.
5. Don't break down tasks to the step level during the initial brainstorming. This can be determined later in the process.
6. List as many tasks as possible. You can always add to the list later.
7. Use other examples, as it is often easier to add to a list than to start with a completely blank page.
8. Validate with non-panel members.
9. Make sure the supervisor has an opportunity to add or delete tasks. Supervisors will see things differently than the actual performer.
10. Take the time to rate each task because the higher numbers will be targeted for training more so than the lower ones.

The following verbs will help properly place a responsibility into a category:

- People verbs: advises, administers, briefs, communicates, coordinates, conducts, consults, counsels, critiques, delegates, demonstrates, directs, explains, facilitates, guides discussions, implements, informs, instructs, interviews, manages, mentors, negotiates, notifies, plans, participates, persuades, promotes, provide feedback, organizes, sells, speaks, sponsors, supervises, teaches, trains, tutors, welcomes
- Data verbs: analyzes, arranges, audits, balances, budgets, calculates, compares, compiles, computes, designs, determines, documents, estimates, forecasts, formulates, identifies, lists, monitors, obtains, predicts, prepares, selects, surveys, tracks
- Object verbs: activates, adjusts, aligns, assembles, calibrates, constructs, controls, cooks, cuts, develops, disassembles, drives, grows, inspects, lifts,

loads, maintains, maneuvers, monitors, mixes, operates, paints, packs, repairs, services, transports, writes

The end result is a training program that is based on the actual needs of employees, rather than assumptions and opinions. There will be more ownership and buy-in from increased employee participation. If you want your employees to own the end result, saturate it with sweat equity. **CBO**

Preston Ingalls, president and CEO of TBR Strategies, has led maintenance and reliability improvement efforts across 30 countries for Shell, Occidental Petroleum, Skanska, Bayer, Exxon, Lockheed Martin, Unilever and Monsanto. He holds two engineering degrees and a master's degree in organizational development. Visit tbr-strategies.com.



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