Training: A strategic HRM function

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"Learning as a way of being is a whole mentality. It is foundational to all efforts to enhance the learning of managerial leaders." (Vaill, 1996)

Organizations are increasingly spending more money annually on training with the belief that it will give them a competitive edge in the local and global market.

Training as an organizational intervention may be defined as a well thought of set of activities aimed to facilitate learning of knowledge, attitude, and skills among its people in the organization to improve their current job performance and contribute to the achievement of organizational goals. On the other hand, development pertains to long-term planned efforts to enhance the total growth of human resource that will lead to the fulfillment of personal and organizational goals.

Training is indispensable and becomes strategic if it takes into account long-term organizational goals and objectives. Having goals such as development of new and better products, expanding to a global market, and developing a workforce with core competencies are strategic (Lynton and Pareek 2000).

Importance of Training

✓ Increases organizational commitment
✓ Develops the cognitive, physical and spiritual dimensions of the employee
✓ Improves job performance
✓ Contributes to flexibility to adapt to changing internal and external factors
✓ Develops interpersonal skills
✓ Creates an interesting and challenging environment
✓ Fosters greater organizational stability less employee turnover and conflicts
✓ Helps reduce costs in the secretariat
✓ Heightens employee morale
✓ Increases knowledge and awareness of the total environment
✓ Helps achieve overall organizational objectives
✓ Helps retain a competent and efficient workforce
✓ Develops creativity and problem solving skills
✓ Helps improve and acquire technical skills

Figure 1. The importance of training

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A number of literature and actual company experiences have shown that training is important for several reasons as illustrated in Figure 1. There is no doubt that management through its human resources management unit will always plan, design, and implement training programs for its rank-and-file, supervisory and managerial people based on any or a combination of these perceived importance of training.

A survey (2003) conducted among different companies in the Philippines reveal that training programs are conducted in their organization because of the same reasons.

Training process

Training as a systematic process of intervention to improve current knowledge, abilities and skills of the workforce involves a number of stages as shown in Figure 2. It involves training need analysis (TNA), designing of training program, implementation of the training, and evaluation of the training.

Experience and the survey results of 200 organizations in 2003 reveal that organizations regardless of the nature of the industry and size of their company, which place a high premium on training, will always ensure that the important components of the training process are given attention.

Training Needs Analysis (TNA)

It involves the determination of the types and specific training necessary to improve current knowledge, abilities and skills of the workforce. This can be done through personal, task and organizational level of analysis. The data can come from target participant supervisor's management, and even from customers, using multiple data gathering methods like survey, interview, observation at work, and performance appraisal results. Other possible sources of training needs are the long-range human resource plans of the company, practices of other organizations, requests for training of affiliate/subsidiary companies, and legislation requirements. The TNA
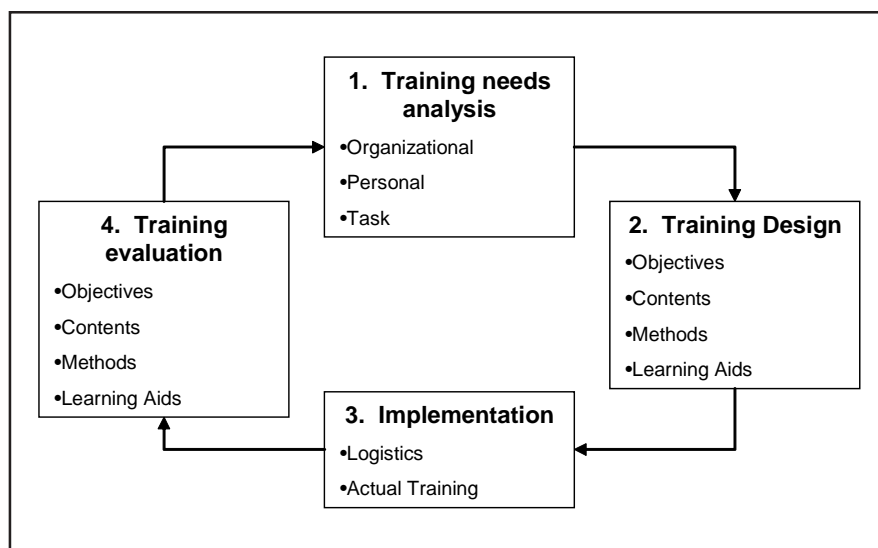

Figure 2. The training process

Training Methodologies	
Anonymous card	Panel Discussion
Demonstration	Skill Practice
Dyadic Discusion or Exchange	Problem-Solving Activity
Game	Questionnaire
Group Inquiry	Role Play
Contracting	Physical Continuum
Creative Activity	Presentation
Checklist	Synergy Activity
Closing Circle	Lecturette
Brainstorming	Observation
Case Study	Project
Reference	Fishbowl
Trio Discussion or Exchange	Full-Group Discussion
Writing Task	Experiential Activity
Self-Assessment and Self-Evaluation	Feedback Activity
Small Group Discussion	Story
Whip	Inter-group Discussion or Exchange
Peer Consultation	Interviewing
Peer Teaching	Index Card Match
Simulation	Information Search
Read and Discuss Group	Guided Teaching
Read and Teach Group	Icebreaker
Mental Imagery	

Table 1. Training Methodologies
Source: Silberman, M. and Whiteling, V. (1992). Twenty Active Training Programs. San Diego California, USA: Pfeiffer & Company.

results serve as important inputs in designing the training program. TNA should be done regularly to ensure that training would respond to the needs of the trainees.

Training design

This pertains to the planning of the entire training program. It starts with the identification of the goals and objectives that should be achieved. The topics or contents to be covered and the

appropriate training methodologies for adult learning are then determined. The corresponding visual aids and learning materials are also specified.

The training design and the TNA are usually done by the training staff of the organization and sometimes by outside consultants. The services of training consultants are usually availed of the large companies for this purpose. A typical training design will contain these parts:

Training Title
Venue
Date
Goal
Specific Objectives
Sequences of Topics
Time Allocation Per Topic
Methodology
Resources Needed
Evaluation

The training objectives of the training design are a critical element that should be written properly to be able to decide on the contents, methodology, and the duration of tackling the topics. The preset objectives also become the basis for evaluating the success of the program. The standard criteria for objective formulation is SMART. Whether the training will facilitate the learning of cognitive, affective, or psychomotor skills, it is important that the objectives are specific, measurable/observable, attainable, relevant to training goals, and time-bound.

On the other hand, the choices of any or a combination of the following training methodologies will largely depend on the objectives, type of participants, and the duration of the training.

Training Implementation

Implementation covers the logistical aspects like venue, food, budget, equipment, resource persons, transportation, and participants. These should be properly attended to during the actual conduct of the training. Therefore, training programs are done within the

Skills / Technical Training	Behavioral Training
Advance Computer Programming	Work Attitude & Value Enhancement
Inventory Management	
Effective Business Writing	Conflict Management
Bookkeeping	Stress Management
Trainers' Training	Time Management
Strategic Planning	Teambuilding
Negotiation Skills	Personality Development
Merchandising	Telephone Etiquette
Effective Presentation Skills	Customer Relations
Accounting for Non-accountants	Assertiveness
Financial Management	Gender Sensitivity
Managing Growing Business	Unwrapping One's Gifts
Taxation for Small Business	Leadership
Basic Selling Skills	Professionalism
Bartending	People Handling
	Seven Habits of Effective People

Figure 2. Specific examples of training programs classified by type of training

company or outside depending on the nature of the program and the financial capability of the organization. It cases where the organization has earmarked a sufficient budget for major training program especially for managers, these are done outside of the company with external consultants as trainers. Companies like Fortune Medicare Inc. and Nestle Philippines have this kind of practice.

Based on the above-mentioned importance of training, specific training conducted by the organizations may be classified as **technical** or **behavioral** training**.** The skills/technical type focuses on facilitating the learning of competencies related to the employees' knowledge and skills. The behavioral type, on the other hand, pertains to ensuring the learning of competencies related to the workforce attitudes and habits. Specific examples of training classified according to these two categories are as follows:

Training Evaluation

This last phase of the training process requires the assessment of the conduct of the training activity. The evaluation is concerned with the measurement of the training success or effectiveness to establish whether an investment in a particular training has paid off. The training effectiveness is usually determined based on the achievement of the previously set objectives and results, considering the needs, methods, and other areas of training administration. According to Kirkpatrick (1998), there are four levels of evaluating training programs. These are the (1) reaction; (2) learning; (3) behavioral change; and (4) impact to organization. The reaction level measures the participants' feedback right after the conduct of the training. Feedback are taken related to attainment of objectives, processes, methodologies, time, reading materials, resource persons/facilitators, and other logistics of the training. On the other hand, participants' learning level determines what specific skills, knowledge or even what they learned is commonly asked at the end of the training period.

There are many ways by which the training evaluation can be done. The use

of the questionnaire form administered at the end of the training is very often done to measure the reaction level. However, it should be noted that using a questionnaire form is only one of the methods to evaluate training. Other ways to assess training according to Hargraues and Jarius (2000) are: (1) formal or informal interviews; (2) feedback from line managers; (3) feedback from the Training Unit; (4) meet a cross-section of suppliers or customers; (5) discuss with staff who attended; (6) wander into offices and talk to people; (7) number of requests to attend other events; (8) academic or practical standards reached; (9) formal certification; and (10) a cost-benefit analysis.

While the paper & pencil or practical test is used to assess knowledge learning of the participants. A good example of this is the pretest and post-test method using different designs. The learning is also usually undertaken simultaneously within the reaction level.

The behavioral change level assesses the changes on the attitude and/or habits of the trainees after the training that is usually observable at the workplace. This will involve a follow up of the trainees in coordination with the immediate supervisor. Examples of behavioral indicators are attendance, promptness, courtesy, cooperation, and level of participation.

The impact to organization level measures the effect of the training on the unit where the trainees belong and on the entire organization. This level can focus on productivity sales profits, and customer satisfaction.

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