

WORKFORCE HORIZONS

Planning Tomorrow's Workforce Today

Louisiana Department of Civil Service

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HOW TO ENSURE A HIGH RETURN ON INVESTMENT IN TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Organizations of all kinds are spending increasing amounts of dollars on training and development. In general, it has been proven to increase productivity, keep the organization viable in a competitive environment and to motivate and retain employees. But how do you get the most return on investment. How do you focus and assess your training to make sure that it is actually applied on the job in a way that contributes to the organization's goals? Here are six actions that will help you get the most out of your training dollars.¹

Set expectations before learning begins.

Prior to any learning process, participants should be told how they will be expected to use the training on their jobs. Identifying specific issues, problems, projects or areas where the training can and will be expected to be applied makes participants aware of

WORKFORCE PLANNING MAXIM OF THE DAY

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” – Nelson Mandela

the importance of the training and improves their learning experience. It also helps for management to identify specific applications for the training to ensure they are not wasting their training dollars and time on nothing more than “touchy-feely, feel-good” benefits by developing general skills that will never actually be applied on the job in a way that contributes to the organization's goals.

Provide coaching on the job after training.

After participants have completed a training course or workshop, have the trainers or facilitators provide follow-up coaching of employees as they apply their newly developed skills on the job on actual projects. Civil Service is following this approach with our job profiling training in which an initial course and workshop are followed by on-site visits to coach participants and assist them in applying the job profiling techniques they learned in the class and workshop.

Require evidence that participants do apply what they have learned. One way to encourage participants to apply what they have learned on the job is to have them begin a specific application during the class or workshop. Civil Service is following this approach in its job profiling training. Participants in the Part 2 workshop will bring position descriptions of specific job classes in their agency for which they intend to do job profiles and will begin the process during the workshop. This will be followed if desired by an on-site visit and coaching as referred to above.

Create a work environment that supports using the newly acquired knowledge or skills. Obviously training dollars are wasted if the employee returns from the class to a work environment that has barriers to using and applying the knowledge gained. But beyond the absence of barriers, the workplace should facilitate application of training at all levels. Organizations should send employees to training with a plan of how they will apply what they have learned when they return to the workplace. The employee's direct supervisor should be aware of the training and work with the employee to plan specific activities to apply the training and incorporate it into the performance planning part of PPR's. The employee's efforts to apply what he or she has learned should be acknowledged by the organization through performance evaluations or other means.

Monitor ongoing application of the new knowledge and skills. One way to encourage employees to apply the knowledge they have gained is to incorporate it into performance appraisal. Have managers set expectations that the new skills will be applied and employees document how they apply them. Employees will know that applying the knowledge they

have gained is expected and will result in a better performance evaluation.

Keep learning focused on measurable results. The purpose of training is to get improved business results not just serve as "job enrichment" or diversion for employees. Tie learning to strategic and operational objectives. For example, if you send employees to training to improve their customer service skills assess how much their customer service has improved after the training by surveying customers.

Following the preceding guidelines will make sure your training dollars are well spent.

¹ Based on information in "Six Ways To Link Human Resources Development To Your Bottom Line," Workforce Management, June 10, 2007, Hepner-Tregoe, Inc.

A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Theresa Welbourne is founder; president and CEO of eePulse, Inc., a technology and leadership research company. She is also an adjunct professor of executive education at the University of Michigan. Her recent article in the Spring 2007 issue of the management journal Leader To Leader provides a fresh perspective on employee engagement.¹

Most current efforts at employee engagement concentrate on employees and how to engage them given today's competitive markets and the changed expectations of the employer-employee contract (e.g., employees no longer expect lifelong employment with a single company or organization). However, she points out that little attention is being given to the engagement levels of management. Engagement must be demonstrated by

example through the actions of executives and managers and not be something the organization is trying to do to employees. She suggests that engagement efforts must start by making sure managers are engaged and provides research results to back this up.

She also points out that most current efforts to improve engagement start with attitude surveys in which employees describe themselves as motivated, having opportunities to advance or excel, etc. But this is the wrong focus. The bottom line goal of employee engagement is to improve productivity and performance. The key to this is not just changing employee attitudes but changing employee behaviors. Attitudes must lead to behaviors that improve organization performance. It is therefore necessary to define the engagement behaviors that drive work performance.

To begin this process, Ms. Welbourne has developed what she calls a role-based performance model that defines five key roles of employees in the workplace.

1. Core job role (what's in the job description)
2. Innovator role (improving process, coming up with new ideas, participating in the innovations of others)
3. Team member role (participating in teams, working with others in different jobs)
4. Career role (learning, engaging in activities to improve personal skills and knowledge)
5. Organization member role (citizenship role – doing things that are good for the company)

The article goes on to discuss her application of the model for a large research project. The major conclusion is that

employee engagement improves to the extent they are allowed to be successful working in both core and non-core roles. But engagement starts at the top. If managers are too busy themselves in their core jobs to find time to be an innovator or team member, too busy to improve their own knowledge and skills, etc., then their employees are likely to feel confused, overwhelmed, and not engaged.

For more on this read the complete article at <http://www.leadertoleader.org/knowledgecenter/L2L/spring2007/welbourne.html>

¹Welbourne, Theresa M. "Employee Engagement: Beyond the Fad and into the Executive Suite" *Leader To Leader*. 44 (Spring 2007): 45-51.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"It is a miracle that curiosity survives formal education." – **Albert Einstein**

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Purpose: The purpose of the Workforce Horizons is to educate readers about workforce planning issues and best practices, inform them about upcoming Civil Service workshops and training related to workforce planning and to provide practical job aids to assist agencies with workforce planning.

Comments and submissions: We welcome questions about workforce planning and suggestions for improvements to the newsletter as well as submissions of articles about what your agency is doing in workforce planning. Questions, comments, and requests to be added to the distribution list for the newsletter should be sent to the editor.

Current and Back Issues are accessible under "Workforce Planning Newsletter" in the HR Reference section of the Civil Service web page at www.civilservice.louisiana.gov