Improve Training Value by Focusing on Performance
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"I need a training program on ..." the opening statement in what often turns out to be a costly, frustrating and unsuccessful campaign to achieve the desired performance. The rational for training seems clear. We are implementing a new system, receiving too many complaints from our clients, not selling enough products, etc. On the other hand, prominent researchers have demonstrated that most performance deficiencies in the workplace are due to environmental factors which includes vague expectations, insufficient and untimely feedback, limited access to required information, inadequate tools, resources and procedures, inappropriate and counterproductive incentives, etc. Yet, when a performance gap occurs, the default intervention is all too often training – although it is much easier to fix the environment then people. To put it in simple terms – if the gap is not due to a lack of skills and knowledge, don't train!

The following steps are presented to help you analyze a performance deficiency, detect the source of the problem, identify solutions – including training – that can produce the desired level of productivity and recommend actions to maximize your return on investment (ROI).

How to improve human performance?

Step 1. Define problem and validate assumptions. In other words, who initiated the request for analysis or training, and for what reason? Based on circumstantial evidence and constraints, validity of request can be evaluated, cost of problem estimated and need for further analysis confirmed.

Step 2. Identify potential sources to the problem. The source of the problem may reside to a variant degree within multiple groups in various units/divisions. For example, "the unexpected drop in market share may have originated from sales, marketing, customer service and/or support staff".

Step 3. Collect data. Vital information required to pinpoint performance deficiency within each group and best vehicle for collecting this data, are specified in this step.

Step 4. Conduct root cause analysis. Collected data is analyzed to uncover factors that impact the performance of each group. These may include employees' lack of knowledge and skills, misunderstanding of job functions, misinterpretation of rules/regulations, access to tools, conflict with colleagues, and so on.

Step 5. Identify plausible solutions. Once the cause of the problem has been uncovered, remedies for each group are identified and rated in terms of their power to bridge the performance gap. In addition to training and job aids, plausible solutions may include task, job and/or organizational redesign, new/improved tools, policies/procedures, incentive system and hiring practices.

Step 6. Identify implementation issues. Assess the feasibility and effectiveness of plausible

solutions by examining the availability of money and resources, compatibility with existing systems as well as management, supervisors and employees attitudes towards the proposed solutions.

Step 7. Compute solutions cost and potential benefits. Capture all costs pertaining to each remedy, including personnel time, lost opportunity, travel, development, facilities, equipment and perpetuation. With costs and potential benefits in hand, anticipated return on investment (ROI) from each solution is calculated.

Step 8. Prioritize recommendations and prepare a plan of action. The costs and benefits of plausible solutions for all groups are compiled and compared to provide a clear picture of which remedies will generate the greatest impact and why.

Contributions

Contributions, on what worked and didn't - including practical tips, advice, white papers, case studies, articles, reviews, online seminars, software tools and research reports - are welcomed. Please send to bahlis@bnhexpertsoft.com. Full credit will be given to author.

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