



BEYOND THE CLASSROOM INNOVATIVE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

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Abstract

The field of employee training and development began to emerge in the United States in the 1940s when women were replacing men on the factory floors because of World War II. In the 1960s, the behaviour of groups and teamwork became a key area of importance. In the 1970s, the socio- technical systems became a critical element of the training and development field. The 1980s brought the issues of globalization, downsizing and quality management to the forefront for U.S. trainers. The top issues in the 1990s were learning organizations, performance-support systems, customer focus, strategic thinking & planning and the role of technology in learning and knowledge management. Training is considered

as “the systematic acquisition of skills, rules, concepts, and attitudes that results in improved performance in another environment”. But the key is to find if the organizations are willing to invest in their human resource through training during economic slowdown.

Key words : Transfer of training , person-organization fit , economic slowdown , Indian trainingenvironment.

Introduction

Training and development is an expensive investment for most organizations. It is fair to say that employers aim to ensure that investments in training provide maximum returns. Unfortunately, the extent to which transfer of skills learned in training are applied to the workplace have been shown to be somewhat limited (Baldwin & Ford 1988) ^[1]. Training may be defined as a planned learning experience designed to bring about permanent change in an individual’s knowledge, attitudes, or skills. As knowledge has become a key economic resource and a source of competitive advantage, effective



training is most important to instill knowledge (Drucker1995)^[2]. In particular, organizations rely on learned knowledge and skills being applied to the job. To a large extent, this behaviour constitutes a transfer of training. In an HRD context, transfer of training represents a core element transforming learning into individual performance (Holton 1996)^[3].

Transfer of training.

Transfer of training is defined first as the degree to which trainees apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes gained in training to their job (Wexley & Latham 1991)^[4]. In order to improve transfer of training, it is important for organizations to not only understand the factors that affect transfer, but also to ensure that the organization's training evaluation model takes account of these factors.. The transfer of training is affected by a number of factors that can be classified into three

categories: trainee characteristics, training design, and work environment. (Baldwin and Ford 1988)^[1] describe the trainee characteristics factors in terms of

ability, personality, and motivation. (Holton et al 2000)^[5] also include prior experiences and efficacy beliefs as constituents of trainee characteristics category.

Economic slowdown and training investments

This is one cost companies aren't pulling the plug on. In fact, Learning and Development (L&D) budgets continue to grow despite a slowdown in hiring. Companies reveal that L&D spends would grow year-on-year. And, the spends are not in single-digits.

A business process outsourcing company in India , which recruits over 15,000 people every year, has chalked out plans to spend over Rs 100 crore in 2012 on L&D. This marks a 12% increase over what the company spent in the previous year.

The story is no different for other companies in the Indian corporate sector. While most companies were not forthcoming in providing numbers to highlight the trend, they anticipate that the L&D budgets would continue to



rise, indicating a shift in focus towards employee retention. In Hotels- to-FMCG company ITC , the L&D spends have gone up by nearly 30% in 2013 over the previous year 2012.

Anecdotal data based in India, and the business scenario from the deep recession in the US bears testimony to the fact that there has been little cutback on L&D spends among quality organizations over the last three years. If one looks at top 10 companies and their behaviour year-on-year, the emphasis on talent development has only grown. Not a single quality organizations would say 'sorry we have a budget freeze this year'. The companies see it as an important investment for the future," said Vinay Hebbar, MD, Harvard Business Publishing, a not-for-profit wholly owned subsidiary of Harvard University which also provides corporate learning solutions to companies in India.

According to a study conducted by Bersin & Associates last year among more than 500 US companies, L&D budgets were up 9.5% over 2010, compared to a decline of 11% in 2008

and 2009, respectively. The learning: bringing down L&D budgets may address a short-term cost issue but will not solve the problem of an underdeveloped talent. In Genpact L&D budget had come down marginally in 2010 versus 2009 to manage cost challenges from the recession. Today, the company is spending over Rs 100 crore in L&D a year.

A competitive business environment appears to be driving L&D spends in India. Companies want to ensure that their managers adapt to the changes. But, at the same time, the process has become more structured.

Modern perspective of Learning and development

Traditionally, L&D used to be a 2-3-day event for employees who would attend, enjoy and return to their jobs without much practical application of the learning they acquired at such programmes Today, L&D is being closely linked to performance management, an individual's competencies as well as succession planning. In addition to classroom



training, there is much more emphasis on coaching and on-the-job practice. That's the philosophical change that is happening today. Integrating L&D into everyday working of individual employees is critical.

Indian learning and development environment

At ITC, where over 126,000 person-days of formal training was organized for employees at various levels in 2011-12, planning begins much before the commencement of the year and flows from the various business plans and capability requirements emerging thereof. Business HR teams work closely with the corporate HR team in actuating the initiatives for L&D. In this context, ITC's L&D team and their resources too have evolved over the years to accommodate paradigm shifts in technology and the way ITC does its business. Consequently, ITC's L&D is a judicious mix of emotive or behavioural aspects along with cognitive aspects that include scientific tools and empirical methods of learning, development and training.

For some companies, higher L&D

spends are linked to their regional sourcing requirement for talent/leaders. With emergence of Indian subcontinent as a primary growth market in the global scheme of GSK in recent past, the company's focus on developing leaders in this region has also been steadily increasing.

HCL Technologies, on the other hand, provides an integrated and comprehensive professional learning strategy to drive key business outcomes. L&D's primary responsibility is to prepare a pipeline of specialists and nurture these individuals for current and future opportunities. The team creates and delivers role-focused learning programme and business-aligned learning opportunities to strengthen business competencies, maximizing strategic thinking and decision making.

Companies are increasingly making employees in charge of their destiny by allowing them to choose their own learning road map. This is to make learning a habit, not an intervention.



Training and person-organization fit

In the present era, which emphasizes the need for change, creativity, and innovation in organizations, firms rely heavily on knowledge workers to achieve competitive advantage (Micklethwait & Wooldridge, 1996)^[6].

Given that knowledge workers identify strongly with their professions, and that knowledge work requires continuous learning (Benson, Finegold, & Mohrman, 2004)^[7], knowledge workers typically search for organizations that facilitate training and skill-development opportunities. Therefore, the degree to which knowledge workers perceive that their organizations offer the necessary training investment heavily influences their intentions in terms of remaining or moving on (Lee & Bruvold, 2003)^[8]. Management scholars have consistently found that the perceived P–O fit and P–J fit are particularly relevant to turnover decisions. P–O fit is defined as the compatibility between people and organizations whereas P–J fit reflects the match between employees' personal characteristics and job attributes

Organizations can provide knowledge workers with a variety of channels for training and developing their KSAs (Noe, 2005)^[9]. These training practices signal that organizations are supportive and are seeking to establish a long-term relationship with knowledge workers (Allen et al., 2003)^[10]. Thus, knowledge workers' perception of organizational training investment should reduce their turnover intentions. However, it is also possible that knowledge workers' acquisition of KSAs, through organizational training investment, actually facilitate their mobility within the labor market (Benson, 2006)^[11]. The arguments discussed above indicate that a boundary condition pertaining to the relationship between training investment and knowledge workers' turnover intentions may exist.

Training investment on employees

Indian organizations on average spent US \$331 per employee on training and development in 2011, according to a study on learning and development trends in India, by the American Society for Training & Development (ASTD)^[12] and Harvard



Business Publishing (HBP).

The survey was distributed among organizations with more than 1,000 employees. Forty-one organizations responded to the survey, with the responding organizations employing 27,394 employees on an average.

The number of learning hours used per employee on average in 2011 for responding organizations was 49.7, the report revealed. This represents a strong training and development programme, putting the organizations in this study on par with ASTD best award-winning organizations, which averaged 49.1 hours used per employee.

In 2011, responding Indian organizations report spending 2.4% of employee payroll on direct learning expenditures. This falls in line with data reported in the ASTD state of the industry report data, which in the past 10 years has reported direct expenditure as a percentage of payroll ranging between 2.2% and 3.2%.

Conclusion

Thus among the key priorities with respect to Training and Development in the Indian context, building a leadership pipeline topped the agenda for most companies, followed by mid-to senior- management training and using technology for learning and development. If one were to ask a CEO what keeps them awake at night, talent development would come as the top in order of priority. Hence in spite of economic slowdown companies are increasing their training and development budget in order to retain their knowledge workers to have a strategic advantage over their competitors.

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