



Alternative Methods for Employee Training and Development

Employee training and development needs to be adapted to your organization's structure, job descriptions and talent philosophy. When deciding on the methods, it is important to take into account the learning process. There are many ways to provide employees with learning opportunities, including:

On-the-job experience

Cross-Discipline teams: Teams formed from staff from different areas of your organization will enhance learning by allowing members to see problems from a diversity of perspectives

Conferences and forums: Employees can attend conferences that focus on topics of relevance to their position and the organization. To share their experience and reinforce the learning, the employee could be asked to present to other staff.

Critical incidents: Day-to-day activities are always a source of learning opportunities, and extreme successes and extreme failures offer up teaching moments through a formalized process requiring the supervisor and employee to discuss and analyze the incident.

Field trips: Broaden the horizon of the employee by exposing them to workplace related locations (other organization sites, partners, clients, other agencies etc.)

Job aids: These include manuals, checklists, phone lists, procedural guidelines, decision guidelines etc. to help them acquire greater facility in performing their jobs.

Job expansion: Adding additional duties by including related tasks – for example, having an employee prepare a report normally handled by their supervisor.

Job rotation: To give a broader perspective to employees and to help them acquire cross-disciplinary skills, employees can be temporarily given opportunities to work in a different departments or roles. This also encourages greater collaboration and teamwork.

Job shadowing: By shadowing an individual in a role that an employee aspires to hold some day, an employee gains experience while evaluating if it is good fit for them.

Learning alerts: By sending employees articles, reports or other documents along with a few questions, you can encourage them to get conversant with issues and analysis.

Peer-assisted learning: By pairing employees with complementary skills, cross-learning and collaborative behavior can be developed.

Stretch assignments: By asking employees to take on, with guidance and assistance from their supervisor, a significantly higher level task they have never handled before, they can learn and grow.

Special projects: Assigning special projects beyond their usual duties help and employee expand their expertise.



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Relationships and feedback

Coaching: The coach transfers knowledge through demonstrating skills and guiding the employee through the steps while giving them feedback, and encouragement.

Mentoring: Similar to coaching, mentoring involves a senior more experienced individual providing guidance and advice to a junior employee through regular, or as needed interaction.

Networking: Learning can occur through professional or informal forums and organizations designed to meet the professional development need of the members.

Performance appraisal: The supervisor and employee evaluate strengths and weaknesses to help them develop. In a 360-degree appraisal, supervisors, peers, staff, clients and others can offer feedback.

Formal classroom training

Courses, seminars, workshops: These provide training in a formal setting, and can be conducted on- or offsite. A trainer, facilitator and/or subject matter expert provides instruction on designated topics.

Colleges or universities: Through tuition benefits, or through targeted reimbursement, employees are able to attend these classes to help them acquire greater knowledge and abilities.

Professional associations: Professional associations, like networks, provide employees an opportunity to stay current in their chosen field

Learning circles: Groups of employees meet to discuss issues, books or articles relevant to the workplace/organization, sometimes over lunch or after hours.

Self-study: Self-paced independent reading, e-learning courses and volunteer work all provide learning opportunities.

Regardless of the method, employee training or development programs require employees to be proactive in determining the knowledge, skills and abilities to be learned. The employer's role is to facilitate learning opportunities, and to give employees opportunities to reinforce what they learn through practice. By implementing some or many of the above strategies, you not only increase the skillset of your human capital, but create a positive environment that will help you retain your employees and build an employment brand.