



Selection & Assessment

Developing Talent through Human Resource
Development: What does the evidence tell us?

CQ Dossier | Evidence-based Human Resource Mgmt

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Executive summary

This CQ Dossier describes how organizations can develop talent through effective Human Resource Development (HRD) systems. It describes the three main stages of HRD including needs analysis, design and implementation of training, and evaluation of training. Finally, it describes the benefits of implementing an effectiveness HRD system for organizational effectiveness.

Employee training and development is an important human resource practice for small and large organizations. In 2015, organizations spent an average of \$1,252 per employee on training and development initiatives. This was a \$23 increase from 2014, according to the ATD 2016 State of the Industry report. Training and development is an important HR practice for organizations because it allows them to harness the talent within the organization and to equip employees with knowledge and skills that are necessary for effective job performance. Research has found support for the positive effects of training on performance at both the individual and team level including attitudes, motivation and empowerment (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). There is also evidence that training initiatives are related to organizational effectiveness and financial performance. (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). This dossier describes how organizations can effectively use HRD tools to develop talent.

The HRD model

There are three main stages in implementing an effective HRD model: needs analysis, design and implementation of training initiative, and evaluation of the training initiative (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). For organizations to be effective, it is important to incorporate all three stages into HRD proposals and initiatives. Moreover, showing support for training and development within the organization is an important predictor of learning outcomes (Baldwin and Ford, 1988). Leaders (e.g. managers, supervisors, executives, etc.) can play an influential role in defining and implementing HR policies, HR practices, and expectations that shape employee participation in training. One of the ways in which leaders can show commitment to HRD initiatives is through supporting a thorough needs analysis, which is the first stage of an HRD initiative.

The aim of a needs analysis is to identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed by employees to achieve effective job performance. An effective needs assessment enables those areas that need training initiatives. The needs analysis should also be aligned with the organizations mission so that any intervention enables increases in productivity and performance. The goal of a needs analysis is to identify the discrepancy or 'gap' between desired performance and actual performance. When there is a difference, then an effective needs analysis will uncover the reasons for this discrepancy and then consider the most effective ways in which to meet this gap. There are three levels of training analysis: organizational, job, and individual. Organizational analysis involves determining what is needed at the organizational level to make the organization effective. The job analysis level involves aligning job descriptions with training needs and the individual analysis level identifies those people who need training.

In designing and implementing training initiatives, it is important to clearly define training objectives to evaluate and monitor the success of the training. Involvement of top management is necessary to integrate training objectives with organizational objectives. Setting objectives also allows organizations to align training initiatives with other HRM practices. For example, HRD is related to performance appraisal through identifying individual training needs.

There are several ways in which organizations can effectively design and deliver training to engage and effectively train learners. When designing training initiatives, recent research suggests that the benefits of training enhanced when organizations apply theory-based learning principles such as encourages trainees to organize training content and increasing trainee motivation to acquire new skills (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). One interesting area of research for training design is error-management training. Error management training encourages trainees to make mistakes then they are learning a new task and research suggests that it is effective in training learning (Heimbeck et al., 2003). Organizations can also employ a range of instructional methods to actively engage and mobilize their talent. Technology-delivered instruction (TDI) is an increasingly prevalent form of training in modern organizations (Rivera & Paraside, 2006). TDI refers to any form of training in which content is conveyed electronically, including computer-based training, intelligent tutoring system, and web-

based training. One reason for the growing popularity of TDI is that it allows training to occur just in time, even if no trainer is present. Because many TDI learning experiences may occur in isolation, it is important that TDI programs incorporate theoretically sound and empirically validated instructional design principles that optimize learning and transfer of training.

There are several ways in which to evaluate the effectiveness of training. The most optimal model focuses not only on training reactions but also includes cognitive, behavioral, and motivational change. Cognitive learning refers to the declarative knowledge acquired by the trainee immediately following training (Goldstein, 1993). Cognitive learning constructs include measures of verbal knowledge and use of cognitive strategies such as self-awareness and self-regulation. Recognition and recall tests are evaluation methods that can tap into the amount of declarative knowledge acquired by trainees. Declarative knowledge is the building block for procedural knowledge, in that trainees in initial skills acquisition make a transition from knowing information (declarative) in applying this knowledge (procedural) (Neves & Anderson, 1981). It is also important to evaluate motivational change because research suggests that self-efficacy is an important predictor of future performance. Self-efficacy is one's belief in ability to carry out a series of behaviors in a particular situation (Bandura, 1982). It is also important to measure behavioral change because changes that occur during training do not always transfer to workplace performance (Goldstein, 1993). Transfer of training is particularly important because although employees might flourish during training initiatives, they need to be supported once they return to their positions. For a training intervention to succeed, trainees must not only be motivated to learn but must also be motivated to use what they have learned back on the job and maintain their newly acquired skills (Naquin and Holton, 2002). Motivation to transfer is an important factor in employee training and development because it is a key indicator of whether trainees will maintain and apply learned skills to their job. In addition, supervisor support for training is important for employees because it signals that management are committed to training and developing their staff (Baldwin and Magjuka, 1991).

In conclusion, it is vital that organizations invest in effective HRD systems in order to effectively leverage talent. Implementing an effective HRD plan that is built on instructional systems theory can increase individual and organizational effectiveness. It

is important that organizations align their training initiatives with the strategic plan of the organization and determine what is needed at the organization, job and individual level.

Key take-aways

- Training and development is an important HR practice for organizations
- The Three Key stages of HRD are: needs analysis, design and implementation, and evaluation
- Supervisor support for training is important
- Organizations can employ a range of instructional methods to actively engage talent

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