

Best Practise Approach to Development

Why follow an Approach?

- Many approaches have been devised and refined over the past four decades – from complex to simple & often diagrammatic. They consistently identify a series of steps or discrete areas to be followed systematically bringing some kind of organised framework to what is usually a dynamic situation. The main benefits of having a shared approach among professionals include: -
 - Consistent quality of output
 - Development needs of people are met in the most cost-effective way
 - Value is added to the organisation in the right way & at the right time
 - People are committed to the development of themselves & others
 - A common language & understanding allows a team approach in developing programmes

Development

- The word “train” means to “draw along .. tame for use .. move in file” & while some aspects of this word cover what Training Managers do in organisations it does not reflect the reality these days; development, however, is all about “growth .. bringing out what is latent”. Based on this “training” suggests learners have to follow a prescribed route & do things in a standardised way – which may be totally appropriate in learning how to apply new skills to a situation.
- However, “development” indicates a learner is more engaged in a process which is adaptive, seeks to enhance performance & equip people for an independent future

Organisation

- People in Development functions need to understand the environment their clients operate within; what gets done, why, how & by whom. This knowledge forms the basis of empathy combined with an ability to ask the right questions, constructively challenging & making people think.
- Change is a constant feature of organisations; change in personnel, procedures, products, raw material, technology, marketplace and competition are typical examples. Many people dislike change and its effects especially when it is managed poorly; training & development have a role in helping to prepare for change through providing access to new skills, awareness of information and enhanced confidence based on insight & understanding.

Needs

- From our understanding of the organisation we should get a view of the issues people face & their priorities in seeking to achieve goals. People often want help in handling the issues they face; but training & development resources within organisations have a finite limit so we must identify those areas of need where our expertise can add greatest value.
- Not all issues can be resolved by training & development; the solution may be new equipment, improved systems or recruitment – all provided by other functions. Our role may be facilitating or coaching to identify resources & the best way to implement them.
- Where we do identify a specific need for individuals or groups we must be clear about what the need is & what will be the quantifiable benefits if the need is met successfully.

Specification

- To create an effective training & development solution a careful & systematic analysis of the needs should be conducted. The way in which peoples' jobs have changed, who is involved & how they are affected. It helps to identify discrete trainee groups with clear & specific needs per group defining similarities and differences where appropriate and from these the training solutions can be specified.
- Consider the trainees groups, their experience, background, capabilities & key features – numbers, availability, culture & values. Tailor the solution as far as possible to meet the needs of each learning group bearing in mind organisational needs, priorities & cost-effectiveness
- It is essential to list clearly the outcomes and performance standards expected as a result of training. The best, if not the only way to do this is by defining training objectives.
- These objectives will be the basis for all the training activity which follows and as such must be carefully prepared through the joint efforts of the training provider and the "client", that is the line manager whose people are to be trained. The more precise the objectives the easier it will be for: -
 - All involved to agree that the proposed training solution will meet the identified needs
 - Potential trainees to determine what they will get from the training, what they will be able to do as a result
 - Deciding on content & ways of delivering the training
 - Monitoring performance during the training against the standards required
 - Evaluating whether the training solution did what it was designed to do & delivered the expected value to the organisation

Design

- At this stage the trainer plans the activities and experiences through which the trainees will gain the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfill the training objectives.

- During this phase the designer needs to consider training objectives, trainee population, training resources, costs, timings and sequencing; in addition by this time the organisation may well have “moved on” so a review of the needs & their context is advisable

Delivery

- This is the most visible part of the training cycle. The reputation of training in the organisation can stand or fall on the performance of the trainers.
- A good trainer can work miracles with a mediocre training design while a poor trainer can ruin all the earlier good work that goes into the production of an excellent learning opportunity.
- The trainer is in a high profile position with the associated risk when developing key staff to meet the needs of the organisation for the future.

Evaluation

- In a training & development context evaluation can be defined as “assessing the total value in social as well as financial terms” or “any attempt to obtain information about the effects of a training programme & make an assessment based on that information”.
- There are a number of facets to evaluation: -
 - **Internal validation** is the process that checks the training programme has met its objectives & the trainees have had the opportunity to show themselves and others that they have learned and have achieved the training objectives. This is valuable to ensure that the design and the training have produced what the objectives said should be produced but is only part of the story.
 - **External validation** is the process of checking that the training actually meets the identified training needs of the organisation – this feedback loop is essential & relies on continued liaison between line management and the trainer.
 - Feedback through internal and external validation it tells us that we got the objectives right and our training has enabled the learners to achieve these objectives. However, if we got it wrong, then it helps identify where the problem lies.
- It is useful to numerically express the value gained from a training experience – the measurable benefits expected & delivered; this is not always easy, often bureaucratic & time consuming but should be planned for & completed whenever possible.
- Evaluation is an assessment of “worth”; people often use subjective scales for this & perceptions vary so ensure you are aware of what is valued by your client stakeholders & the organisation.