

Introducing workplace training

The new roles



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Introduction

What is this book about?

This book is about the four training development roles which workplace personnel undertake when introducing structured, competency-based training programs.

Who is this book for?

This book is for workplace personnel who want to introduce structured, competency-based training programs for existing staff or new apprentices and trainees. This could be a manager, a union official, a team leader or a human resource specialist.

It deals particularly with the issues commonly faced by middle managers.

Why read this book?

A great deal has been written about training initiatives but this book is different because:

- it is written in straightforward language
 - it draws on the experience of workplace personnel who have already introduced competency-based training programs into their organisations
 - it treats structured training as one aspect of establishing an organisational learning climate
 - it deals with difficult areas such as management reluctance, trainee insecurities and tensions between training and work
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How to use this book

The booklet is designed so that you can select any section which you feel is relevant to you. In each section you will find:

- A discussion of the tasks which you need to undertake to develop a training program
- Direct quotes from workplace personnel who have introduced training programs
- Examples of strategies from workplaces
- Checklists to help you design various aspects of your training program
- Tips from practitioners

There is a list of references at the end of the book for further reading.

Four training development roles

This section tells you:

- how information was gathered for this book
- about four training development roles necessary when you introduce a structured training program into your workplace

Workplace interviews

Much of the information included in this book is taken from a series of interviews conducted in a number of organisations which have introduced structured workplace training programs. These organisations are listed in the reference section at the back of this book.

The purpose of these interviews was to gather helpful first-hand information from those who had planned and developed workplace training programs.

Four complementary roles



The workplace personnel interviewed talked about their successes as well as the challenges which they still face. During these discussions it became clear that anyone developing a structured training program in a workplace needs to adopt four complementary roles which are briefly described below:

- Role 1 :** Change Agent
- Role 2 :** Learning Facilitator
- Role 3 :** Networker
- Role 4 :** Administrator & Evaluator

Role 1 **Change Agent**



In this role you are concerned with:

- assessing where the organisation is and where it is heading
- ensuring that the skills and knowledge base of the workforce keeps pace with change

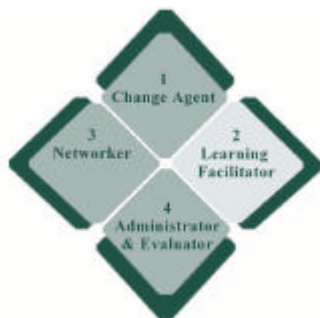
As a Change Agent you need to realise that:

- there are limits to how much change can be imposed
- new training initiatives can only be sustained if managers and employees support them and have a sense of ownership

As a Change Agent your tasks are to:

- review the organisational context
- gain management support
- plan new training initiatives
- involve employees
- integrate learning and work

Role 2 **Learning Facilitator**



In this role you are concerned with:

- introducing specific training initiatives
- improving the overall organisational learning climate

As a Learning Facilitator you need to realise that:

- learning can involve risk-taking and uncertainty
- adequate support must be provided for learners
- training plans must take account of learner needs & abilities

As a Learning Facilitator your tasks are to:

- design the training program
 - select and train mentors
 - support learners
 - develop and co-ordinate assessment
-
-

Role 3 **Networker**



In this role you are concerned with:

- cultivating relationships so that you can gather information from a variety of sources eg managers, employees, other divisions or companies, government and industry
- locating and using learning opportunities and resources within and outside your organisation

As a Networker your tasks are to:

- locate information
- arrange financial assistance
- learn from other organisations
- arrange multi-site training placements

Role 4 **Administrator & Evaluator**



In this role you are concerned with:

- co-ordinating processes and information about skills
- co-ordinating training activities
- co-ordinating budgets
- ongoing monitoring of programs

As an Administrator & Evaluator you need to realise that:

- administration and evaluation go hand in hand
- effective administration relies on feedback

As an Administrator & Evaluator your tasks are to:

- distribute information
- arrange programs from outside suppliers
- maintain records
- manage the budget
- undertake on-going evaluation

Role 1

Change Agent



Change Agent tasks:

- A Review the organisational context
- B Gain management support
- C Plan new training initiatives
- D Involve employees
- E Integrate learning and work

This section discusses these tasks in detail.

A useful thing we did was to survey some of our customers to explore ways we could improve things. We also asked different units to think about what training they needed to help them function better. From that, we developed our training plan.

A Review your organisational context

Aim: to review where the organisation is heading and contrast this with where things are now

Focus: training, learning, skill formation and knowledge acquisition

Method: establish a project team and draw on their insights.

The project team could include a HR rep, union officials, a manager, team leaders and a mix of respected, experienced workers; skilled, exemplary workers and enthusiastic, newer workers.

Where are we heading?

To find out where your organisation is heading, you need to review:

- the mission, the vision and strategic directions
- customer needs and feedback
- quality and productivity trends and future expectations
- anticipated internal and external influences
- changes in technology eg hardware, software, communication and information systems

Where are we now?

To find out where your organisation is now, examine the following contexts:

- the in-house training and skills context
- the employee relations context
- the work organisation context
- the technology context

Use the checklist on the following page to assist you in this review.

A REVIEW CHECKLIST

Where are we now?

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>The in-house training and skills context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Current skill levels ◇ Literacy and numeracy gaps ◇ History of assumptions about training ◇ Availability of training equipment and spaces ◇ Existence of trained mentors or assessors | <p>The work organisation context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Workplace constraints ◇ Opportunities for mixed groups to work together and learn from each other eg operators, trades, managers ◇ Workplace supervisors and assessors ◇ Shift rosters and shiftworker needs ◇ Teamwork and how teams operate ◇ Quality eg QC, TQM, quality testing |
| <p>The employee relations context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Requirements of awards and enterprise agreements ◇ Financial support for trainees eg training wage ◇ Ways to involve union officials in new training initiatives ◇ Rewards and recognition options | <p>The technology context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Work processes, hardware & systems ◇ The design of software eg does it enable employees to learn as they work? ◇ Scope for people to help each other to learn to use new equipment ◇ Availability of information that people need to learn ◇ Availability of systems to record training and skills data |

We conducted train-the-trainer courses first, and then tried to get senior management interested. It was the wrong approach.

Our apprentices have their own log books and are keen to do jobs where they will learn new things. However, that threatens some managers, who are used to making all the decisions. This has been a tension right through. We want apprentices who can drive their own learning, whereas managers want apprentices they can drive.

B Gain management support

The attitude of management can make or break new workplace training initiatives. It is essential that you get the help of management at an early stage.

Aims:

- to make senior management aware of your intentions and convince them of the benefits
- to involve middle and first-line management as you review organisational directions and build a plan to improve skills

Involving middle managers or team leaders who understand the importance of learning and skills contributes enormously to workplace improvement.

Factors affecting management attitudes to training

There are a number of factors which may affect management's willingness to support training initiatives. These may include:

- production or service pressures
- inadequate understanding about skills & training
- lack of involvement in new training initiatives
- concerns about their own job security
- reluctance to share information

Part of our HRD strategy has been to remind senior managers of the benefits of a more organised training system.

We used to go to individual managers and try to get their support, but we never got it. Eventually, we discovered what the problem was. Training and skills were not a key result area, so management never took much interest.

Training and skills need to be a key result area

Because of pressures to become more efficient and lift quality, many organisations have identified key performance areas which they then monitor closely. Skills and training need to be amongst the variables monitored.

Issues to discuss with management

- Who will be involved in the training and learning effort?
- How will the climate for learning be improved?
- What resource support is necessary?
- When will learning occur so that interference with normal work is minimised?
- Where will learning take place eg workplace, training rooms or off-site venues?
- Why is training and learning important for the organisation to achieve its strategic goals?

Words are important

Think about how you describe your training plans to management. Sometimes it is better to talk about training as *ways of supporting staff* or *new business opportunities* rather than as *training programs*.

Employee support can help to sway management

We needed to sort through the industrial considerations from the beginning, which we did through an industrial working party made up of union, employees and the employee development manager. They discussed whether we'd pay for skills used or gained, and worked out issues such as how casuals would fit into the new system. Unless these issues are sorted out from the start, training will not go ahead or be effective. We had very little management support at the time, but now they can see that training is a means of achieving a common end. The involvement of employees and their enthusiasm overcame resistance. Now, management are slowly getting behind it too.

One of the lessons we learnt from trying to implement training is to keep the system simple. Things like coaching plans and assessment schemes should be easy to use and should relate to a straightforward, tangible model. People are put off by sophisticated flow-charts and thick technical guides

C Plan new training initiatives

Taking the time to plan new training initiatives will help ensure that you:

- consider all the main issues beforehand
- know what you're trying to achieve
- find a balance between an ideal approach and what is realistic

A great deal of time and effort can be spent developing a comprehensive strategy that is too expensive or too complex to put into practice.

A training plan should indicate:

- where the organisation is heading and where it is now
- what you plan to do
- what outcomes you are aiming for
- a timeline for the project
- support and resources you need

Sample Training Plan

Conduct traineeships in a structured, organised way in order to provide:

- high quality, comprehensive work experiences
- integrated on and off-the-job training and assessment that meets national and industry/enterprise quality standards
- accurate information, data and results regarding trainee's progress and achievement

Sample Training Outcomes

Trainees will be competent in:

- relevant industry/competency standards
- key employment competencies at the relevant level

We made a deliberate effort to principles in the way we went about A lot of training is still 'chalk and deliberately tried to put trainees in a position. This aspect has been

Planning

When developing a training plan you need to ask yourself a range of questions related to the following aspects of training:

- relevance
- assumptions relationship to industry standards and/or nationally accredited
- flexibility

the questions related to these aspects of training.

Competency-based training and everyday learning

for capturing learning from everyday work. By focusing on outcomes, CBT leaves the way open for employees to learn from



A TRAINING PLAN CHECKLIST

| Area | Questions |
|---|---|
| Relevance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ How well does the plan match the way that work is done? ◆ Are reference manuals and other paper-based and computer-based materials up to date? ◆ Does the plan make maximum use of real workplace problems and learning opportunities? ◆ Is the plan consistent with both the organisation's directions and remuneration systems described in enterprise agreements? |
| Appropriateness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ How realistic are the learning outcomes and assessment tasks? ◆ Does the plan recognise workplace learning in areas such as problem-solving and teamwork? ◆ Are learning resources clear and user-friendly eg operator reference manuals, computer help-screens etc? |
| Assumptions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Does the plan make realistic assumptions about the learners? ◆ For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ age ◆ gender ◆ language and literacy skills ◆ knowledge of the workplace |
| Consistency with competency-based principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Is the plan in line with enterprise and industry competency standards? ◆ Does it reflect a broad notion of competence? ◆ Does it recognise the existing knowledge and skills of learners? ◆ Are learning and assessment tasks competency-based? |
| Flexibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Does the plan allow employees to learn at different times eg during night shift? ◆ Does the plan allow employees to learn at locations eg at own workstation? ◆ Does the plan allow learners to concentrate on what is most relevant? ◆ Can activities and resources be adjusted to accommodate different preferred learning styles? |

Tips from practitioners

Tip No. 1
Introduce training in one section or in an area which is open to change

Introducing training in one area is effective where:

- people lack experience and confidence in learning
- management understanding is limited

The results can then be used to market the program more widely.

Tip No. 2
Establish training in general areas eg communication skills and on-the-job mentoring

When general training has been effective, it has:

- helped employees recognise the value of learning
- developed skills in areas such as literacy and presentation.

Once such programs have been conducted, it is then possible to concentrate more programs focusing on technical skills.

Tip No. 3
Integrate language and literacy with other areas, rather than treating it separately

Language and literacy is one skill area which is very significant in some workplaces. Apart from the stigma that might be attached to separating low-literacy employees from other trainees, experience shows that language and literacy skills are most likely to improve when linked to other skills and activities.

We got people on side in a variety of ways. The training committee helped, and we did a lot of PR work. We gradually got people's trust, partly because we showed a willingness to put our money where our mouth is. It is also important to deliver on promises quickly, and to sell the benefits of new training schemes both personally and professionally.

D Involve employees

One person may do a very good job of co-ordinating training but there are many benefits in involving a cross-section of employees. Involvement of employees in the development of learning materials promotes ownership and ensures that what is developed is relevant and up-to-date.

Employee reluctance to be involve in planning

We've got a very good fitter who just can't relate to writing up competencies and documents. His attitude is 'just watch me and I'll show you how, but don't ask me to write it down'.

Training Manager

Before involving employees, it may first be necessary to provide assistance in the skills that they themselves will need.

Example from a manufacturing company

A literacy consultant was employed who:

- provided training in Plain English and in principles of competency-based training
- worked with a number of employees to develop user-friendly learning materials.

These materials were trialed with a small number of potential users and were then submitted for accreditation.

To implement workplace training programs properly, you really need to change work organisation, so learners have opportunities to be exposed to different things, see the need to learn, and have the chance to apply what they do learn. It takes negotiation with supervisors, particularly in the beginning.

HR Manager

E Integrate learning and work

The workplace is full of opportunities to learn and the best training plans integrate learning and work. For example, learning can result from:

- involvement in irregular activities eg stocktakes or plant maintenance shutdowns
- visits to other sites
- dealing with contractors, sales personnel, maintenance technicians, customers
- working in other areas
- reviewing progress and problems with other team-members
- helping to design and install new equipment

Tips from practitioners

Ways to improve the climate for learning

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| From an apprentice: | Encourage learning by doing <i>Sometimes we've had to do the TAFE test, but we've never had the chance to see the equipment at work. I reckon it's much better to have the practical work experience first, then the theory.</i> |
| From a trainee: | Use job rotation to help employees master a range of competencies <i>If you're placed with one section, with no rotation, it's a bit hard to get a broader picture of what's happening.</i> |
| From a union official: | Change work organisation and work culture to support learning <i>People can't apply the skills they have gained if their work practices have not changed. They try to apply the quality concepts they learnt and their manager says 'I'll tell you when it's wrong. Go back to the line.' Naturally, they end up feeling cynical and frustrated.</i> |
| From an HR Manager: | Consult widely and regularly as you make changes <i>We spent quite a bit of time talking to our (internal) customers about what they wanted, and then liaising with them until we had achieved the outcomes they wanted. We thought of this process as being about continuous improvement—meaning that we have tried to keep refining the training materials and approaches that we have developed.</i> |

Role 2 Learning Facilitator



Learning facilitator tasks:

- A Design the program
- B Select and train mentors
- C Support learners
- D Develop and co-ordinate assessment

This section discusses these tasks in detail.

Overall the trainees like the CBT approach. They know what's expected of them and feel a sense of getting somewhere.

**Training
co-ordinator**

A Design the program

- Aim:** To design a training program which:
- introduces specific training initiatives
 - improves the organisational learning climate

Competency -based training

Australia's systems of skills recognition, framing, assessments are all based on a competency-based training (CBT) approach. The competencies are written up as industry competency standards.

CBT provides:

- clear statements of work requirements and does not rely on unspoken assumptions about what is required
- recognition of the skill requirements in occupations previously considered unskilled
- the possibility of incremental achievement via statements of competence which means that there is no need to complete an entire qualification before credit is given for achievement
- a basis for recognition of prior learning (RPL) and recognition of current competency (RCC)

Training packages incorporate competency standards which are grouped to deliver a range of qualifications. Training packages are the framework for training and recognition within our industry sector.

CBT vs traditional training

| <u>Traditional</u> | | <u>Competency-based</u> |
|--|--------------------------|--|
| <p><u>Content</u> What the trainer talks about.</p> <p><u>Methods</u> How trainees spend their time.</p> | Focus | <p><u>Outcomes</u> What participants can do. Outcomes are carefully described. Participants are clear about what they have to do, to what standards and under what conditions.</p> |
| <p><u>Fixed</u> All trainees spend the same amount of time completing a subject.</p> | Time | <p><u>Variable</u> Trainees can learn at their own pace.</p> |
| <p><u>Pass or fail</u> Results come from theory and practical tests</p> | Assessment | <p><u>Criterion based</u> Trainees are assessed as competent in specific areas. When competency standards are not achieved, participants are encouraged to try again.</p> |
| <p><u>Classroom centred</u> Most training happens in a group classroom environment.</p> | Location | <p><u>On the job and off the job</u> A lot of the learning happens on the job either under supervision or as part of normal work</p> |
| <p><u>Ignored</u> Everyone is trained in the same thing.</p> | Previous learning | <p><u>Recognised</u> Learners can concentrate on new skills and knowledge.</p> |

Training delivery that meets the needs of trainees

The way training programs are delivered greatly influences their effectiveness. You should think about what methods of delivery are appropriate for the learners in your workplace.

For example:

Lecture-style presentations may be quite inappropriate for people who have been away from formal learning for a number of years.

Complex terminology may be difficult for trainees from non-English speaking backgrounds to understand.

Large group training sessions with mixed-ability groups may lead trainees to withdraw or switch off.

Day-long training sessions may be too taxing for learner concentration spans, particularly if there is little opportunity to apply what has been learnt on the job.

Learn from trainee responses to training

They think they've got to give us all this theory first. Then, after that, they show us what it means. It's so boring.

Employee



Focus on learning by doing wherever possible.

Take advantage of the workplace as a learning space.

The guys walked out the first time we ran a course. They felt we were setting them up. They couldn't see how all the reams of training materials related to their jobs.

Section supervisor



Keep paper-based training materials to a minimum.

A lot can be achieved by on-the-job mentoring.

It may not be necessary to bring everyone together in a training room environment.

We spent all this money training them on the use of the new equipment but it was only when they kept making mistakes that we realised most of them had not been able to follow either the trainer or the manuals. No-one felt confident enough to say there was a problem.

Plant manager



The best way to learn about new equipment is by using it to perform real tasks.

The best way to learn about new equipment is with the support of a mentor.

Learning approaches preferred in the workplace

The way trainees prefer to learn is a challenge to conventional approaches to training.

To improve the response to training you may need to adopt alternative approaches.

| Conventional approaches | Alternative approaches |
|---|---|
| Focus is on content of subject | → Focus is on examples and problems |
| Trainer is seen as expert | → Trainer acts as facilitator |
| Emphasis is on <i>know what</i> | → Emphasise the <i>know how</i> |
| Learner is passive | → Allow participants to contribute content |
| Sessions are pre-planned | → Design flexible and responsive activities |
| Objectives are imposed | → Negotiate objectives |
| Mistakes are seen as errors | → View mistakes as learning points |
| Emphasis is on theory | → Emphasise learning by doing |
| Orientation is to the trainer or provider | → Recognise different individual needs |

Definitions of curriculum

Curriculum: In the vocational training sector a curriculum is the specification of learning outcomes and assessment methods.

National curriculum: Curriculum accredited at the national level which is based on national competency standards.

Enterprise level curriculum: Curriculum developed at an enterprise level which is able to take into account:

- business priorities
- learner needs
- workplace culture

Definition of Training Packages

Training packages are the foundation of training in the industry sectors where they are being introduced, including for traineeships and apprenticeships. Training packages specify:

- the relevant competency standards for the industry
- the qualifications that can be achieved
- the way competency standards are assessed.

Training packages have been developed for 19 industries, and within the next few years another 50 will be introduced.

Training packages provide a variety of flexible options that link on-the-job and off-the-job training and learning. For example you might make arrangements with a registered training organisation (RTO) to manage on-site training and assessment and issue qualifications, using trainers and assessors from both the RTO and your own organisation.

Existing curriculum can be aligned to the training packages.

Curriculum development is often about the management of conflicting interests. Whichever way you look at it, it's political. Companies often see TAFE teachers as a passive way of getting across a particular set of values. And, of course, teachers can be pushing their own barrows, too. There is a need to make the different agendas explicit so the parties can negotiate.

Union training officer

Tensions in curriculum development

Tension has existed in the past between curriculum developed at an enterprise level and nationally accredited curriculum. A number of workplaces have developed their own curriculum. This is either because a nationally accredited one was not available or because they wanted to have training programs that addressed their particular business goals and needs. The best of these enterprise level curricula have resulted from extensive consultation with employees, vocational education representatives and industry representatives.

Getting started with CBT

- Get the support of senior management
- Find out what has already been done to avoid duplication
- Involve key individuals and groups from your workplace
- Start small eg one module or one work area
- Identify the jobs you want to cover first and plan out what you intend to do
- Get advice from people with experience eg industry associations, trainers, consultants, TAFE teachers, other companies
- Send some employees to reputable courses dealing with CBT, workplace training and workplace assessment

Time constraints can compromise workplace training

*We're under so much pressure, it's easier for the expert to do it and say 'watch me!'
There's no time to talk through things, or go back over what we've done.*

Employee

Lack of relevance can compromise workplace training

There is a lot of resistance on the ground about modules with air-fairy concepts like communication styles, and playing touch-feely games. The typical response from workers is: 'If we are talking about competence, why do I have to do this bloody module?'

Union organiser

A common criticism of curriculum packages developed by external experts is that they lack relevance to the enterprise and the work of trainees.

Training packages address this problem by allowing training to be tailored to the needs of the enterprise.

Flexible delivery of training programs

Delivering programs flexibly helps groups of employees who have difficulty accessing traditional forms of training.

Flexibility in workplace training programs might involve providing:

- on the line support
- peer tutoring
- contract learning
- self-paced learning materials
- computer-based programs
- learning by distance mode
- availability of modules at different times and locations

Taking advantage of everyday learning opportunities

Everyday opportunities for learning are regularly available in many workplaces. All it requires is for someone to recognise these opportunities and to take advantage of them.

Examples:

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Problems that occur during production | → | use these as opportunities for training in troubleshooting |
| Plant maintenance shutdowns | → | used these as opportunities for training about plant processes |
| | → | use these as opportunities for trainees to see inside equipment and storage vessels |

We've used competent operators to do the coaching, and they've done a great job. They relate well to the trainees, and they're always on hand if needed. Interestingly, they're tougher on the trainees than we would be, because there is a close relationship from the very beginning.

**Human Resource
Manager**

B Select and train mentors

A mentor is anyone in the workplace who systematically and regularly helps an employee to learn eg:

- a tradesman assigned to supervise an apprentice
- a bank teller who spends time helping a trainee learn on the job

Mentoring contributes greatly to workplace learning.

Mentoring is usually only a part, and sometimes a very small part, of an experienced employee's job.

Selecting mentors

Mentors need to be:

- technically competent
- good communicators
- tolerant of anxiety and uncertainty
- able to empathise with learners
- able to demonstrate and supervise practice
- willing to share their knowledge

Mentors also need to:

- respect learners
- understand how adults learn.

We worked closely with AMES to train mentors in presentation skills and awareness of language and literacy issues. Their training involved Category 1 Train the Trainer and Assessor courses, a short course on language and literacy and Plain English, and a workshop on adjusting training delivery to suit different needs and styles. This course is now being accredited. We hope to end up with well-qualified mentors at each site.

Mentor training

To benefit fully from mentoring, an organisation may need to invest considerable effort in mentor development.

Some workplaces have put a lot of effort into developing mentors.

Mentoring as part of the job

If a manager is expected to also be a mentor, he or she will usually need some outside help. We had a training manager who helped in this way. She looked after overall co-ordination of trainees and of mentoring.

It is important to include responsibilities such as mentoring in role descriptions and performance objectives.

Mentoring takes time, and yet previously it wasn't defined as part of anyone's job. But now mentoring is part of the requirement for career progression here, and we've made sure that it is included in our skills matrix.

Some tradesmen have no idea how to train you. They treat their knowledge as a game, where you have to guess the rules. They figure that they have learnt the hard way, and so should you. My main responsibility was to buy lottery tickets and get the lunches.

Apprentice

Problems with mentors

Some mentors are ill-equipped for the role. For example the mentors mentioned in the quote in the left-hand box hoard their knowledge and neglect learner needs.

Some mentors may feel very anxious in the unfamiliar role:

We've found supervisors were generally petrified of implementing training. Mentoring can be very different from supervising and trouble-shooting.

Feedback for mentors

Feedback is a prerequisite for learning. However the need to give feedback to mentors about their performance can be easily overlooked.

Examples from the workplace

Some workplaces have established informal networks amongst their mentors. These groups have regular skill development workshops every few months.

Some workplaces use facilities such as e-mail to provide mentors in small or isolated locations with information and advice.

Some organisations produce a newsletter for mentors, with short articles addressing different issues, problems and sharing hints.

*When they came to
tell me I was chosen
to go on the task
force, I thought:*

*'Oh my God! What
have I done?*

*What's a seminar?
They want me to go
for three days!' For
six weeks I couldn't
sleep. Then I went
and finally told
them I couldn't do*

*it but they said: 'We
will help you. We
need to have you on
the committee
because we need to
know what the real
people think.' So
then I thought:
'Well, OK!'*

**Middle aged Greek
female operator**

C Support learners

There are many uncertainties and risks associated with learning eg:

- learning something new may be difficult
- the trainer may expose the fact that the learner doesn't know something

Many workplaces understand the need to provide support for employees as they became involved in training. They can see the subsequent payoffs in terms of increased morale and productivity.

It is important to give learners as much support as you can. This means:

- communicating in constructive and supportive ways with trainees
- giving helpful feedback
- tuning in to potential barriers to learning
- being on the lookout for weaknesses in areas such as literacy

Ways of providing effective communication in training

- Be supportive and encouraging
- Provide positive feedback to build confidence
- Use examples and visual images to explain abstract ideas and processes
- Give learners opportunities to show initiative
- Recognise that learners have experiences and insights that you can build on
- Avoid an atmosphere of criticism
- Be frank and encouraging
- Reinforce learner progress by commenting on it
- Use two-way discussion to identify learner skills
- Encourage trainees to help plan learning activities
- Explain tasks clearly
- Ask questions to make sure the learner understands
- Help learners to focus on overcoming skill and knowledge gaps

I was mostly doing menial work when I got here... An 'OK' or 'Please correct this' was all my supervisor ever said. I only found out after six months when he did the appraisal how critical he was of my work. What a useless way to tell me about things that I could no longer do anything about!

You only get feedback when it's negative. They'll talk with you if things go wrong, but by then it is often too late.

Learning cannot occur without feedback

Feedback is any information that tells a learner how they are progressing. It is essential during workplace training.

Often feedback is poorly handled and there is:

- too little feedback
- poorly timed feedback
- negative feedback

Effective feedback

Feedback that is inadequate, delayed or too ambiguous always results in lost learning opportunities.

Giving effective feedback means that you:

- talk about things that can be acted upon
- focus on priority areas that need attention
- are supportive and non-judgemental
- share ideas and information rather than give advice
- are direct and specific
- explore alternative solutions with the trainee
- avoid overloading the trainee with too much feedback
- make sure the time and place for feedback are appropriate
- ask trainees to say what they think has been done well
- avoid saying *you did a great job but....* as the person is likely to remember the negative message rather than the positive one.

Most of our men are hands-on types that were never comfortable with pen and paper. A lot of them are happy enough to work alongside someone else, and learn from him that way, but they have a real block about sitting in a classroom situation.

A sub-contractor

If you give most of my workers an option between going to a training course or doing more overtime, most of them will go for the overtime.

Employer

Barriers to participation in training

Employees are often reluctant to undertake training because of various barriers:

- The concept of a career path is new to many employees, especially if it is linked to knowledge and skills acquisition.
- Employees may have had unsatisfactory experiences with formal education.
- Employees may lack self confidence and fear embarrassment.
- Rewards and recognition associated with training may be inadequate.

People give a range of reasons for their reluctance to undertake training:

- *I'm too old to learn new skills*
- *It's forty years since I was at school, and I didn't like it then!*
- *I'm no good with pen and paper learning, I can speak alright, but I'm not so good at writing.*
- *I've got no time to study at home, things are pretty tight as it is.*
- *I'd be letting the team down if I go off for four hours a week, who's going to do my work?*
- *I'd be stupid to say I need training when our jobs are on the line.*
- *I can do my job alright now, so what do I need to go to school for?*

It's supposed to be competency-based, and then you find the only way to show competence is by writing an essay!

Employee

We're developing training manuals, and it seems to me that it's our choice basically whether they end up looking like the Financial Review or a comic book. I reckon the blokes here would rather have a comic book version.

Workplace trainer

Language and literacy barriers

Employees from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) and employees with literacy and numeracy difficulties are two groups which need special consideration when designing and delivering training.

Traditional training programs can demand quite high levels of English language and literacy.

Example from the workplace

One of the ways we helped workers achieve success was to make sure that the first module was developed with minimal language, literacy and numeracy skills, so that it was not too hard. Once they get a few wins on the board, it is much easier to get them involved. We also found that it was more useful to put the managers through the training first so they knew what the construction workers were going to be exposed to.

Member, Building Industry ITAB

Assisting employees with language and literacy difficulties

To help employees with language and literacy difficulties to undertake training, try to:

- involve employees in developing training materials
- pair up English-speaking employees with employees who have limited English
- ensure everyone gets a chance to contribute their knowledge
- use realistic and accessible English in all written documents
- provide opportunities to talk about difficulties with mentors or at informal meetings

Ways of building in-depth skills

- Continue to oversee learners' work until they have mastered the task.
- Talk to learners about ways to apply procedures in different circumstances.
- Make learners feel confident that they can become more skilled.
- Encourage learners to think about their own performance.
- Encourage learners to take pride in their work.
- Make sure there is some on-going opportunity for practice.
- Make it clear who to go to for help, if learners need it in the future.

For us, assessment is very much an industrial relations issue. There has always been resistance to assessment, the time it takes, who gets to decide, and what the decision is based on.

D Develop and co-ordinate assessment

For many organisations the development and co-ordination of assessment have been important and challenging issues. One reason is that in many workplaces, particularly in the manufacturing sector, assessment has been tied to remuneration and career progression.

Selecting assessors

It is important to select assessors with credibility in the eyes of both managers and trainees. Selection criteria should include:

- knowledge and skill levels
- work experience
- fairness
- the ability to represent different groups of employees

Training assessors

Training for assessors should be based on the national assessor standards which should be applied to the particular work environment.

A TAFE teacher was assessing a worker who had limited English. The teacher asked: 'Can you explain why this equipment isn't working, and can you tell me the steps I should follow to fix it?'. The worker knew how to fix it but he didn't have the terminology to talk about it. He couldn't do it. Later on, his workmates talked to the teacher and he was passed. But if they hadn't spoken up for him, the worker would have been assessed as 'incompetent'.

Union official

Questions about competency

There are many questions which cause difficulties with competency-based assessment:

- At what point someone is competent?
- Does competence relate to the number of times a trainee does something or is doing it once enough?
- How well does something need to be done?
- How important is it to be able to explain a process and the knowledge associated with it?

Dealing with issues about assessment

Openly discuss assessment issues with other project members and involve those with a stake in assessment. Try to reach agreement on acceptable standards and approaches. Once agreement has been reached, these assessment criteria should be recorded and used as the basis for future assessment.

Invalid assessments

Assessment approaches are invalid if they:

- do not accurately assess trainee performance of the skills being learnt
- assess other skills which are not being learnt
- over-emphasise written English
- assume familiarity with questioning techniques which may be unfamiliar to the person being assessed

Principles of Quality Assessment

- Principle 1:** Assessment should not focus only on routine procedures. Assessment should cover all aspects of competence.
- Principle 2:** Assessment should recognise competence, no matter how, where or when it has been achieved.
- Principle 3:** Assessors and assessees should be clear about the purpose of assessment which is to formally recognise competence.
- Principle 4:** Assessors should be trained and competent in terms of the national assessor standards.
- Principle 5:** Assessment methods should assess what they claim to assess.
- Principle 6:** Assessment methods should give the same results, no matter who the assessor is or when assessment takes place.
- Principle 7:** Assessment practices must be fair and unaffected by the assessee's age, race, gender, level of literacy, social or educational background.
- Principle 8:** Skills must be assessed under conditions as close as possible to those under which they would normally be used.
- Principle 9:** Assessment should be practical, cost effective and create minimum disruption.
- Principle 10:** Access to assessment should not be subject to artificial or unnecessary restrictions, such as learning time or age limits.

(Adapted from VEETAC Working Party on the Implementation of Competency-Based Training (1992) *Assessment of performance under competency-based training: Administration of competency-based training*. Canberra: AGPS.)

Giving feedback about an assessment

Giving helpful, non-threatening feedback following competency assessment is an important part of the assessment process. This involves:

- giving the feedback directly or soon after the assessment
- planning the time and place of assessment to eliminate interruptions
- encouraging two-way discussion
- being brief and clear by getting to the point and giving specific examples
- using language the assessee understands
- checking to see whether you're being understood
- finishing the discussion by saying what the next step is

Challenges to workplace assessment

- Relating skill levels to industry standards
- Keeping track of assessment information
- Assessing in high-pressure or noisy environments
- Fair assessment for people with limited language and literacy
- Maintaining common assessment standards between different work-sites
- Conflicts between assessment and work pressures
- Assessing attitudes and general skills eg problem-solving
- Training the best assessors - those who would be the most competent
assessors are often in demand for many other activities as well

Tips from practitioners

Ways to set up a workplace assessment scheme

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Tip No.1 | Give people a choice about how they will be assessed eg: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• verbally or in writing• using direct observation or multiple-choice questions |
| Tip No.2 | Keep assessment approaches simple and user-friendly. |
| Tip No.3 | Use two assessors instead of one. If there is a disagreement, they can both discuss what happened before making a decision. |
| Tip No.4 | Give the learner the assessment criteria beforehand and let them know well ahead of time what they will be asked to do during the assessment. |
| Tip No.5 | Market assessment as a part of the learning process, and not as something threatening. |
| Tip No.6 | Provide an appeals mechanism for employees who feel they were not assessed fairly. |
| Tip No.7 | Encourage self-assessment through log-books and use of self-directed modules. |

Role 3

Networker



Networker tasks:

- A Track down information
- B Arrange financial assistance
- C Learn from other organisations
- D Arrange multi-site placements

This section discusses these tasks in detail.

A Track down information

A great deal of information is available about training policies, products and services. However those wanting to introduce new workplace training programs can still have considerable difficulty finding the information they want. Dealing with bureaucracy and finding specific information can be a major challenge, especially for small business.

Contacts for locating information

Industry Training Advisory Bodies (ITABs)

ITABs play a brokerage role between industry, providers and government.

ITABs maintain close relationships with a range of organisations which may be able to help you.

Business and personal contacts

Other companies which are further along the training track can be useful sources of information.

Contact individual trainers, HR managers, union officials.

Public and private organisations

Employer associations

Your local TAFE college

Australian National Training Authority ANTA (based in Brisbane)

Group training companies

If your industry sector has a group training company, it should be able to advise you on labour market programs, funding, competency-based training and assessment.

New Apprenticeship Centres (NACs)

NACs are part of the national Job Network that replaced the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES).

They provide advice on training options, promote apprenticeships and traineeships to industry, assist employers to establish them and administer payment of Commonwealth incentives to employers. Phone 13 2811 to be connected to your nearest NAC.

NSW Department of Education and Training Industry Training Services Centres

These centres directly support the operation of the apprenticeship and traineeship system in NSW. Phone 13 2811 to be connected to your nearest centre.

Other sources of information about training

Some organisations produce:

- regular newsletters and bulletins
- information kits and videos

Some organisations offer:

- advice to companies on workplace training programs
- workshops
- updates via electronic media

There's not enough information on what's available, especially if you're not in the city.

Apparently there is government money around, but the paperwork,

bureaucracy and deadlines involved are often ludicrous.

From a workplace point of view, we can't get employees motivated and then find we have to wait six months, or discover that we can't get any money!

Some people seem to be able to get TAFE to do things for next to nothing, or to arrange a subsidy from somewhere.

Unfortunately, we haven't been so successful.

B Arrange financial assistance

Developing the infrastructure for skills development is an expensive process, especially if there is little previous history of structured training in your organisation.

Having an external source of funding is very useful as it provides an opportunity to embark on new initiatives with relatively little outlay.

BUT finding out what funds are available can be a major challenge, especially for organisations without specialist HRD staff.

Government funds

A number of Commonwealth and State Government departments can provide financial support for structured training.

Funds are usually available for specific purposes eg:

- needs analysis
- development of standards and curricula
- training of on-the-job trainers and assessors

Government funding is helpful, but it carries certain obligations as well.

Accounting and other report requirements may take time and require external assistance.

The people responsible for workplace learning should have sorted out why they are doing what they're doing. We tell them there is no point applying for government funds until they've got their business priorities worked out. Otherwise, it's a waste of dollars and good will. You may only get one shot at it, and if it's too early, or badly planned, it can go against any future proposals you may have.

**ITAB
representative**

Successful funding applications

A successful funding application requires:

- clear training objectives
- evidence of management and union support
- attention to timing and support

The best place to start is with your ITAB.

Timeframes

Some funding sources are only available at certain times.

Others, such as trainee subsidies, are available on an on-going basis.

Find out about the different time-frames and criteria for funding in the early stages of establishing training.

Preparation work

To increase the likelihood of success when applying for funding, do some preparatory work first.

Work out:

- what funds you should apply for
- why you are applying for funds
- what your business priorities are

We made a deliberate effort to network. We got into ITABs, talked to people in TAFE, and so on. It took a lot of time, but it has proved to be time well spent, because now we have made valuable contacts, we have tracked down useful resources and providers, and we learnt a lot as we carried out the investigation.

C Learn from other organisations

Interpersonal and inter-company networks are very valuable.

Networks help those responsible for training to:

- find out about relevant projects
- find out about sources of funding
- find out about sources of information
- learn from other organisations

For smaller workplaces, networks pave the way for:

- sharing resources
- forming useful partnerships

Visits

Networking makes it easier to arrange visits to other organisations and worksites which may have progressed further or are handling particular aspects of training well.

Visits to other organisations provide an opportunity to see how different organisations deal with areas related to training eg teamwork, enterprise agreements, information management etc.

Involvement in committees

Getting involved in different committees or projects gives you an opportunity to influence industry curricula, standards and policies.

One of the biggest challenges in trying to set up traineeships is networking. I've put quite a lot of time into making contacts. For example, I've been on one of the National Training Council committees. Overall, I've learnt heaps. If you feel daunted by all this, a good starting place is your Industry Training Council. They can usually put you on to consultants and to other people who are in the know. In our case, the Retail Traders Association has also been helpful, and the CES has been quite good.

The benefits of bringing trainers together

A 1995 evaluation of the AVTS Professional Development Program highlighted the value of bringing trainers or mentors from different companies together.

An outstanding achievement of the [professional development] project was the networking that occurred during the workshops and has continued afterwards. Participants used the workshops to share common problems and solutions and to discuss training and assessment issues, ideas, techniques, training packages and training and assessment materials. This contact has been maintained by many of the participants since and will be a positive influence in the future.

Meat Industry Rep

A significant achievement of the project has been the development of a co-operative network of trainers and assessors across the industries. The large number of persons trained through the workshops has produced a "critical mass" who now work with each other as a peer support group. This is particularly important because it provides an informal structure by which trainers in smaller organisations in the industry can get assistance from those in medium to large organisations.

Forest Industries Rep

We tried to identify the learning opportunities each of our sites has. Then, we developed a matrix of locations and training opportunities, and used this to map out a plan for each trainee. We'd give each trainee a 12 month forecast of programmed moves, so they knew where they were going. Sometimes, we'd even use the same location twice for different tasks or experiences.

D Arrange multi-site placements

Small businesses

Many organisations do not deal with a sufficiently wide range of activities to provide comprehensive training. This problem has been addressed in some small business areas via group training schemes.

Group training schemes

Group training schemes allow trainees and apprentices to gain a wider range of learning experiences, by rotating placements with different host employers.

Group training schemes offer organisations the flexibility to take trainees without much of the administrative work that goes with developing and organising training in-house.

Group training schemes are run by private companies, generally on a non-profit basis.

Group training schemes are the largest employer of trainees and apprentices in Australia

Group training schemes are usually organised on an industry or regional basis.

Large businesses

Larger businesses may need to arrange for trainees and apprentices to spend time at a number of different departments or sites. Methods which support structured on-the-job learning at different sites include:

- mentoring
- computer-based training
- the use of logbooks
- modular materials
- the use of e-mail
- occasional plenary sessions at a central location

Large, multi-site organisations often need to plan how to place trainees so that they are able to gain the required skills and experience. Typical considerations include:

- Length of stay at each location

A stay that is too long can lead to boredom.

A stay that is too short may not allow the trainees enough time to become familiar with the work or the people.

- Number of trainees per location

There may need to be a quota.

The number may be determined by workplace needs or availability of mentors.

- Practical considerations

Necessary administrative arrangements should be made well ahead of time.

Sufficient notice should be given.

The expectations of trainees and mentors should be matched.

Role 4 Administrator & Evaluator



Administrator & Evaluator tasks:

- A Distribute information
- B Arrange programs from outside suppliers
- C Maintain records
- D Manage the budget
- E Evaluate as you go

This section discusses these tasks in detail.

A lot of people need to know specifics about the course before they make a decision. They want to know things like what the course is about, what they will be able to do when they finish it, what they will have to do during the course, how they will be assessed, how confidential their results are, and how it links in with workplace changes.

A Distribute information

In workplaces which have not been involved in much formal training, a great deal of work may need to go into addressing people's fears about the unknown.

Providing examples of training materials or course outlines is one way to demystify what is involved.

Keeping people informed helps to minimise their fears and concerns.

User-friendly information

Information about learning opportunities should:

- explain what the training program is
- explain the broader issues surrounding learning eg links to quality and skill-based pay
- be written in straightforward language

Pamphlets and information bulletins are useful ways of providing information.

We brought all the teams with their leaders to the learning centre on a rotating basis, so we could talk about why they should do the courses. Then we showed them the materials, talked about the centre, and the sort of help that was available, like coaching in literacy. We also attended team meetings to look at which modules would be the most relevant for the different teams.

Information sessions

Some workplaces have found that short information sessions are very effective.

These might be part of a team meeting or an informal meeting on the shop-floor.

The aim of such sessions is to give employees a chance to ask questions and air their concerns.

Support and encouragement from a range of personnel, such as union representatives, consultative committee members and managers also encourages people to become involved.

Getting the message across to non-English speaking background employees

In workplaces with a high concentration of non-English speaking background employees, it can be difficult to distribute information about training. Some organisations have used:

- bilingual employees from the workplace
- arranged forms of assistance such as professional interpreters and union officials from outside the organisation
- multilingual surveys to identify potential barriers to training eg the need to provide childcare after normal hours
- bilingual employees from other sites who have participated in training to alleviate fears

Gaps in training information

In some workplaces employees claim that they get too little information about what they should be learning:

| | |
|---|---|
| A trainee | <i>It's difficult to direct your own learning because you don't know what it is you have to learn. You might only realise much later, for example, in your final year, that you've missed an opportunity early on.</i> |
| An apprentice | <i>You're supposed to be told by fax a week before about modules, but it often never gets to you, or you get it a week late. We get more information through our own networks.</i> |
| An education and training provider | <i>People want to know specifics about a course—what the course is , what they will be able to get out of it, what they are expected to do during the course, how they will be assessed, how confidential their results are, how it links in with the changes in their workplace.</i> |

We were very naive at first, because we thought that employees would welcome the opportunity to improve their skills. Unfortunately, they feared that it was just a way of sorting out the sheep from the goats.

**Training
co-ordinator**

Learning, information and security

One of the reasons employees may be reluctant to participate in training is that they fear it will be linked to downsizing. Accurate information about future organisational directions can help to minimise such fears.

A comprehensive information strategy should make employees more aware of the extensive changes that have occurred nationally in areas such as skills recognition.

Many of the national training changes have been about improving people's employability and many employees find it reassuring to know that the certificates they gain in one organisation will be recognised elsewhere.

Initially, we had a hard time convincing TAFE of what we wanted. But we persisted, and over a period of time, through invitations to come out on site and share information, we gradually built up a relationship. Although this took considerable time, we ended up with a much better product than we could have hoped for. Our training is now customised, it allows for cross-skilling of our trainees, and the trainers understand better what's involved.

B Arrange programs from outside suppliers

Quality training programs depend on your decisions. You need to decide what help you need from outside the organisation and who you should seek help from.

Contracting out

Some organisations contract out whole processes such as needs analysis, training delivery or competency assessment.

This may be neat administratively but it can mean that:

- insider perspectives are not adequately taken into account
- the knowledge gained ends up with the consultants rather than the organisation

Expert assistance

It is often better to use outside experts to assist a project team from within your organisation.

It is important to get a commitment from these experts to share their knowledge.

We really had to shop around, and go by people's reputation. We wanted someone with a vision of what's possible and achievable in our industry. They also needed to have an intimate understanding of training reform issues—because we didn't have that expertise! We really wanted someone who was prepared to inject skills into the company, travel to different branches, consult with people on the ground.

Responsibilities and time lines

Once a provider has been selected, it is important to clarify responsibilities and time lines.

Review meetings

Regular review meetings can:

- ensure that the training project stays on track
- ensure that the training project stays on budget
- enable changes to be made quickly when necessary
- deal with potential problems before they mount up

Decisions should be made at the outset about:

- who will attend the review meetings
- how often the review meetings will be held
- what kind of progress reports are required

I was surprised to find big differences between different TAFE colleges in terms of money charged and the types of services offered. At one college, it took three meetings to organise some training, and we are still waiting on a quote! Since then, we've dealt with another TAFE college, and we're really happy—they've got a lot of experience, and they're flexible and reasonably priced.

Choosing a provider

There is a large number of registered training organisations (RTOs) and this number is increasing.

The quality, cost and type of services on offer vary markedly, even within particular sections of the same organisation.

Finding an RTO that fits your needs can take a while but it is well worth the effort to get the right one.

Organisations such as ITABs, employer associations or unions may be able to provide advice.

Choosing a consultant

Before choosing a training consultant, it is useful to develop selection criteria.

Use the checklist on the following page to assess a potential consultant.

Some workplaces have attempted to assess potential providers by asking them to do a small project before making a decision.

CHOOSING A CONSULTANT CHECKLIST

| Area | Questions |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Track record | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What projects have they recently been involved in? ◆ What is their understanding of learning issues? ◆ What is their understanding of current work practices and processes? ◆ Do they meet deadlines? |
| Relevance and flexibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Will they tailor their approach to suit your particular needs and conditions? ◆ Will they offer related services such as literacy? ◆ Will they take into account existing employee competence through RPL? ◆ How quickly can they respond? |
| Quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To what extent do they build on existing opportunities for learning at work? ◆ Are they willing to contribute their knowledge to your workplace? ◆ How do they evaluate the quality of their own work? |
| Ability to relate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Can they work with the training committee? ◆ Can they work with management? ◆ Can they work with employees? ◆ Are they sensitive to industrial issues? ◆ Can they negotiate with industrial and government bureaucracies? ◆ How will they work with people who already have a training role in the organisation? |
| Reliability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Do they do the work themselves? ◆ Do they delegate or subcontract the work? |
| Cost-effectiveness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ How do their fees compare with others? ◆ Do they charge a flat, all inclusive fee or a fee based on time spent? ◆ Have incidentals such as travel costs been included in a quote? |

Years ago, there was an accident involving an apprentice, and in the investigations that followed by groups like Workcover, we realised that our records were a legal document and needed to be kept in proper order.

C Maintain records

When setting up workplace training programs, it is important to take the time to establish an efficient record system. Such a system has a number of benefits:

- It provides learners and the organisation with details of their achievements.
- It enables the workplace to better manage its human resources.
- It helps keep track of expenditures.
- It enables the company to maintain records of employee skills and assessment results.
- It provides objective information about employee competence which may be useful in situations such as disputes over competence or following an industrial accident.

Use the checklist on the following page to help set up a record system.

Computer-based record systems

Whilst adequate training records may be kept in a paper-based system, a number of workplaces have begun to use computers to track training and learners.

The best computer programs:

- handle course registrations
- handle reports and correspondence
- produce confirmation letters as bookings are received
- generate invoices
- store training histories
- give instant access to information about the training that has been provided
- give instant access to information about future training needs

TRAINING RECORD SYSTEM CHECKLIST

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Technical skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ skills needed in each work area ◆ who is learning each skill ◆ who is competent in each skill area |
| Training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ modules available ◆ who has completed requirements of each module ◆ timetable of classroom sessions ◆ bookings for each training course |
| Training infrastructure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ competencies assessment criteria ◆ competent workplace trainers ◆ competent workplace assessors ◆ training equipment eg suppliers, service information and serial numbers |
| Employee profile | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ areas of competence of each employee ◆ levels of competence of each employee ◆ training plan outlining what has to be learnt both on and off the job |

We've found that many supervisors didn't know how to use log books. We just assumed they'd catch on, but there was real confusion about when they could tick things off. This led to a lot of resentment.

Log books

Log books list the learning outcomes and assessment criteria that trainees are expected to achieve during a training program.

Log books provide a record of:

- what must be learnt
- how and when this learning was achieved
- who was involved in the outcomes

Log books are also known as:

- competency assessment logs
- training record books
- skills records books

Log books range from small pocket-sized booklets to large folders. Computer-based log books have also been developed.

Use the checklist on the following page when designing log books.

Using log books effectively

To use log books effectively, mentors, managers and learners may all need help with issues such as:

- how the log books are to be used eg are they to be used to record learner notes, to keep a diary of learning experiences, to record demonstrated competencies or to record work done?
- how often log-books are to be checked
- how knowledge and attitudes developed in training are to be recorded

DESIGNING A LOG BOOK CHECKLIST

An employee's log book should:

- ◆ state what its purpose is
- ◆ explain how it is to be used
- ◆ provide space for the employee's name
- ◆ list learning outcomes and assessment criteria based on national competency standards
- ◆ provide space for the date on which a competency is achieved
- ◆ provide space for the workplace supervisor's signature
- ◆ have scope for the employee to record learning from one-off events, project work and particular activities they're interested in
- ◆ be written in plain English appropriate to the language level of the workplace

It's been quite difficult knowing how to cost out training. Different institutions and training consultants charge very different rates for things. Half the battle is knowing how to ask the right questions, so we don't run into budget problems. For example, it's best to ask for a cost on the whole package, and sign a ceiling price. That way, if it blows out, it's their problem, not yours. Costs like travelling time and phone consultations can add up when you're dealing with country locations. The same applies to delivery modes—we've found that offering courses in one block as opposed to three can make a huge difference to employee's travel costs.

Training manager

D Manage the budget

The financial aspects of training present many challenges.

Even less ambitious projects may have a number of hidden costs which can cause budget blowouts.

Assessing costs

It is important to assess the likely costs of new training plans as early as possible and revisit these estimates periodically.

The main costs will be associated with:

- time spent by managers and mentors away from normal duties
- employee replacement costs
- shift and overtime allowances
- travel
- time spent tracking down information
- costs of producing and printing training materials
- time involved in consultation and information sessions
- cost of equipment and resources
- cost of outside providers/consultants
- time to keep records

When you're dealing with outside providers, you've got to watch out for groups that expand their costs to absorb your whole budget! I've learnt to ask them to cost things out at the start, without saying how much I've got to spend. Then I keep them to the agreed figure. That way, costs don't get out of hand.

Budgeting for consultants

When using consultants, it is important to establish a business-like atmosphere from the beginning and to avoid disclosing too much about the funds available.

There was no point talking about learning new skills when we had no one taking responsibility for getting things off the ground. It was continual buck-passing, especially when it came to the money side.

Often the financial management of training programs involves record keeping to track what you've spent money on in the past. I think it is also important to ask 'what have we learnt from the way we spent money last time that will help us in future'.

Because we collected feedback after each module, we've been able to nip problems in the bud and make sure the next group doesn't have the same hassles. Some of the problems we've identified include poor communication, the design of assessment tasks, and difficulties getting people to courses on time. They're not big things, but they can become major problems if you don't fix them.

E Evaluate as you go

Instead of viewing evaluation as something you do at the end of training, it is better to think of evaluation as an on-going process of:

- setting goals
- collecting feedback
- reflecting on how things are progressing
- making adjustments as you go

Evaluation begins as soon as you start to review the organisational context and plan new learning initiatives.

On-going attention to evaluation provides an opportunity to address difficulties before they become major concerns.

We've made sure the top managers are involved in the evaluation, because ultimately, they're the ones that have to be convinced of the value of training.

Evaluation criteria

Traditionally, training programs have tended to be evaluated in terms of the extent to which participants have achieved learning objectives.

In a work situation the criteria may need to be broadened to include on-the-job learning, productivity and employee morale.

Typically, evaluation focuses on two aspects of training:

i Aims = WHAT you expect the program to achieve

Evaluation criteria might include:

- skill levels
- skill breadth
- productivity
- quality
- feedback from team-leaders

ii Method = HOW you go about encouraging learning

Evaluation criteria might include:

- data on learner satisfaction
- feedback from mentors
- direct observation of learning activities

Evaluation is itself a learning activity

The purpose of evaluation is to learn about what you are doing so you can do it better.

Try to share what you learn with others. Involve representatives of all the groups affected by training on planning and evaluation teams eg managers, unions, trainees, customers, team-leaders.

Getting to the real issue

When you're evaluating workplace learning activities, remember that things are not always what they seem.

Problems can be revealed for which the real cause is not immediately obvious.

| Surface problems | | Possible real issues |
|--|---|--|
| Learners bored and frustrated | → | Learning resources poorly designed |
| Assessment quality varies a lot | → | Assessors not properly trained |
| Strong resistance to training | → | Employees worried about job security or about whether they can cope with formal training |
| Participants in training sessions look disinterested | → | Long night shifts leave people feeling sleepy during daytime training |

References

Further Reading

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Sources of information

Much of the information included in this book is taken from a series of interviews conducted in the following organisations:

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Athletes Foot | Integral Energy |
| City Rail | Liverpool Council |
| Email | Carlton & united Breweries |
| Goodman Fielder (Aust Milling Div) | NSW Police |
| GrainCorp Operations | Friskies Pet Care Co |
| Universal Retailers | The Uncle Tobys Co |

Information was also gathered from the following secondary sources:

- discussions with:

| | |
|--|--|
| Restaurant & Catering Association of NSW | Municipal and Employees Union |
| NSW Furnishing ITAB | Hunter Valley Training Co |
| NSW Food ITC | Aust Industrial Relations Research Centre - University of Sydney |

- interviews conducted during the past five years as part of consultancies and research into workplace learning by Field Learning Pty Ltd
- a review of the literature (see further readings section above)