

On-the-job Training

As technology changes and employees are obligated to learn to use new equipment that keeps the competition on their toes, companies find that they must offer training programs that often times can be quite sophisticated. Businesses often find themselves attempting to improve productivity by increasing the employee's knowledge and their ability to perform a wide variety of tasks. Training and developing employees for optimum performance is crucial to organizational success as it represents a planned effort by an organization to facilitate employees' learning of job-related behaviors.

On-the-job training is the most fundamental type of training. One estimate suggests that organizations spend three to six times more on OJT than on classroom training. This number equates to roughly \$100 billion dollars each year on training. OJT is the easiest kind of training to implement and can be effective where the job is relatively simple, such as clerking in a store. Intricate jobs require a more intense training effort as more variables are introduced into the system.

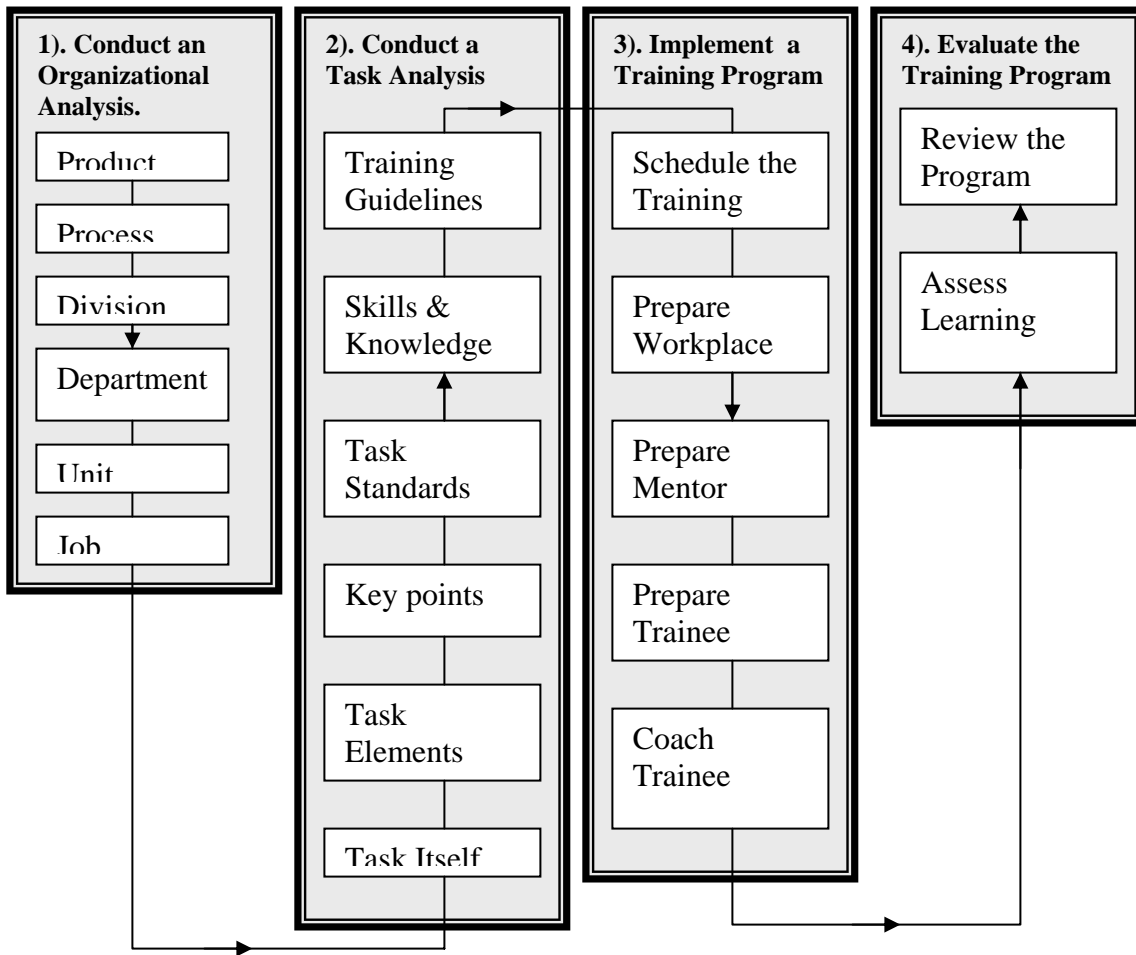
The flow of on-the-job training is relatively straightforward. As an employee gets hired they immediately begin to be trained by doing, or watching others for a while and imitating them. This "other" could be an experienced employee or supervisor that takes the new employee "under his or her wing" to show how to perform job duties. This type of training can have both positive or negative results, depending on the skills and habits of the person being imitated.

OJT has some advantages such as when the employee is being trained, the trainer—a manager, or a senior employee—has the opportunity to build good relationship with that employee. OJT also has few out-of-pocket costs for training facilities, materials, or instructor fees and easy transfer of learning back to the job, as the learning site is the work

site. The training can have positive effects on employee morale as it teaches them not only have skills related to the specific tasks they do at work but also trains them with the ability to think critically and solve problems that sometimes can be applied to their normal lives. Plus as time becomes a critical source, OJT is potentially the most effective means of facilitating learning in the workplace.

There are some drawbacks to OJT, as it is one of the most poorly implemented training methods and has these shortcomings: (1) lack of a structured training environment; (2) poor training skills of management; (3) lack of defined job performance criteria. To overcome the above mentioned problems, experts in the Total Quality Management field suggest developing realistic goals and measures for each OJT area; planning a specific training schedule for each trainee, including set periods for evaluation and feedback; helping managers to establish a nonthreatening atmosphere conducive to learning; and conducting periodic evaluations, after training is completed, to prevent regression. To establish an on-the-job training program a company needs to assess the needs of the organization as well as the skills of the employees to determine the training needs; design the training to determine what the training needs are; and evaluate the effectiveness of the training.

One abridged approach to the framework of an OJT system is discussed below. It contains four steps: 1) Conducting an organizational analysis; 2) Conducting a task analysis; 3) Implementing the training program; and 4) Evaluating the training program. A self explanatory picture representation of the framework would look something like this:



The first step is a system for examining business imperatives, determining jobs that are competitive for sustaining business competitiveness, and actually identifying the personnel requiring the on-the-job training. The second step is a system for developing and reviewing on-the-job training proposal for the crucial work processes as well as jobs identified. The third step is a system for actually allocating the resources and implementing on-the-job training for the critical work processes and the identified jobs. The last step is a system for evaluating and improving the effectiveness of on-the-job training in actually achieving the organizations objectives.

Each of the systems should have a three column checklist. The “list” section should have the critical tasks that are associated with OJT; the “what exists” section should be an analysis of what the company already has; and the “what needs to be put in place” section should be a plan of how the company will get from where they are to where they want to be in terms of on-the-job training.

A condensed example might look like this:

List	What Exists	What needs to be put in place
<i>Organizational Analysis</i>		
Supervisors involved in identifying OJT needs of their staff...		
There is a system for regularly reviewing the OJT needs analysis to ensure responsiveness to changing business requirements...		
<i>Task Analysis</i>		
Key points for ensuring error free quality work are provided by all OJT proposals...		
Guidelines are provided for the delivery of training in all OJT training...		
<i>Implementation</i>		
There's a system for allocating financial resources and staff for implementing OJT...		
There's a system for finalizing OJT schedule...		

On-the-job training is a valuable way to keep the company competitive by having knowledgeable employees and it is a cost effective way of training those employees. OJT is used throughout all industries in one way or another because most companies already possess the infrastructure for it, all that is needed is an implementation strategy. The implementation can be costly and time consuming but is usually worth the risk if used appropriately.

References / More Information

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