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**Developing Relationships and
Workplace Achievement**

Assignment 1

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The benefits of training and developing individuals in the workplace

There are two areas of the benefits of personal development that we will address in this report – the benefits to the individual in question and to the organisation the individual works in. Both of these aspects are important, as personal benefits are what often motivate people to get started with something and organisational benefits are often the reasons that get organisations interested in offering such development opportunities in the workplace.

Benefits to the individual of having a developing himself

The main benefits of developing oneself according to Cottrell (Cottrell, 2016), could be summarised as having a structured plan, a roadmap, of a vision on how to become a better version of yourself. What this allows is for the individual to be proactive and be better prepared compared to others who do not put much effort in developing themselves, in the face of change and in looking towards the future.

This version of oneself could be applied in the workplace or outside of work life - in the report we will focus largely on the benefits to one's career.

Some of the benefits that one can achieve from going through a development plan is achieve sense of gratification or satisfaction, get a better idea of the direction in which their career is or may be heading.

According to Maslow (Maslow, 1943) personal growth can be to an extent linked with some basic needs of a human being as development of ones self relates to that persons self-actualization – the desire to become better what they do. We could from here, based on Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs, extrapolate that personal development is somewhat of a basic necessity for someone to become fully satisfied with life and achieving this would help someone achieve a sense of fulfilment in life.

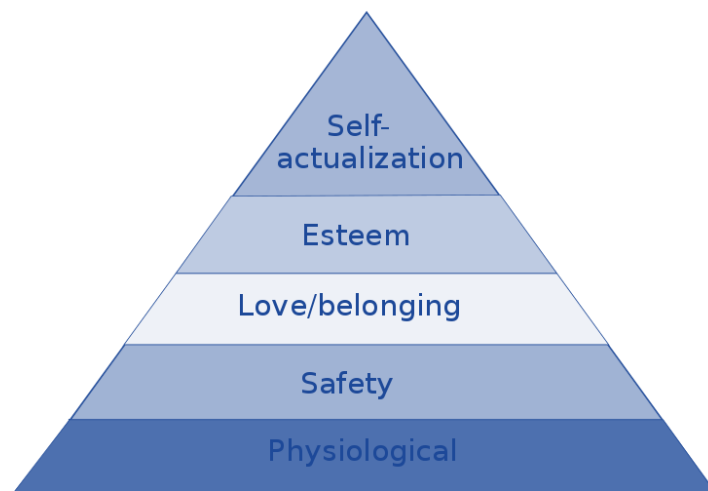


Figure 1 – how self-actualization and personal development sit on the hierarchy of needs – based on (Maslow, 1943)

However, it may be worth bringing this back in the context of a workplace enginemen for a minute. Because it just as likely that the development plan may be handed down by the employer to make the employee better a particular task. In this situation it may be possible that the individual may not see the task of personal development as much of a rewarding activity and rather another chore. Lets now have a look at what personal development may look like from the workplaces perspective.

Benefits of development for the workplace

Difference between personal and workplace development

According to Agafonova (Agafonova, 2015) within a business, personal development for short term needs is often referred to as training and in the set up of a workplace the aims of the personal development is set by the managers and they are intended to meet any needs that the business may have or is forecast to have.

Quickly glancing back at Maslow's theory on hierarchy of needs and fulfilment, it be seen that the development offered at a workplace, "training", is unlikely to align with a persons own goals for self-development. For example, someone may want to learn better cooking skills, but unless they work as a chef it is unlikely their employer would pay for this training.

There can also be long term development in a workplace setting, for example an employee being offered the opportunity to do a paid educational course to top up their knowledge in their field. However, these long term development plans are more rare and are likely to be more in line with the persons own personal development goals.

I make reference to the differences in the types of development to clarify that they may mean different things depending on the environment.

The importance of training

It is important to train employees because it is a proven way to move the organisation forward using the resources already available.

For the training to be effective however, according to Clarke (Clarke, 2014) the management should endeavour to identify the areas within the organisation that would benefit most from any new knowledge or skills gained from training. As a simple example: if the organisation has staff composition of predominantly older employees who did not have the opportunity to fully learn the IT skills needed for a modern environment, than a rigorous training programme in these IT skills would be of greater benefit than say for example training them in the minor changes to management procedures.

It should be mentioned that training is also often provided to employees help retain niche skills they may have which if lost or degraded may be very time consuming to recover.

Generally the journey to identify training opportunities follows similar steps as shown in the following figure.



Figure 2 – steps in the training process – adapted (Joel Rodriguez, 2017)

The first three steps are generally the responsibility of the management team, as they are the ones most familiar with the needs of their organisation and the skills of their staff.

In recent years however, there have been companies that help other companies provide training to their employees – in particular to train people in IT skills. Sometimes when managers aren't confident enough to provide the training themselves they may hire such external companies to help with the later stages of training.

Examples of how training can help employees achieve more for their organisation

Communication

One area that is critical to almost any business is communication among its staff, in particular the communication between the junior staff who do the day to day activities and senior staff who are responsible to making sure the daily tasks are done to standards.

Training can be provided in for or lessons on effective communication, or using different mediums of communication other than face-to-face conversations.

In organisations that hires regular full time employees there is the expectation that with time everyone will get accustomed to each other and communication skills will develop. However, in many industries long term employment is not the norm and in these situations having a senior staff that can communicate effectively with strangers and get their word across would be very beneficial.

Get new staff up and running quickly

When a new staff member joins an organisation it is likely that they may not know all the do's and don'ts of that job or may be struggling to learn them.

In this situation having someone higher up taking time to personally guide the new employee can help the organisation reduce the downtime needed to get new hires fully operational.

Positive aspects of training staff

As can be seen from the examples training staff creates staff that are more efficient at doing their jobs making them, in simple terms, better employees.

As the employee gain new skills or improve existing skills through company driven training, they become better suited to be promoted to senior positions. All of these creates a net positive effect that overall sees a business grow and bring in more revenue.

It could be said about all of the examples shown previously that over time, the employees would figure things out. The benefit here with directed training is that time needed to mature an employee is drastically reduced.

Costs in providing training

Thus far we have talked a lot about the benefits of training and personal development. Lets now have a brief look at the costs associated with development and training. The costs are not just monetary, but as researched by Olaniyan (Olaniyan, 2008) personal development can draw time and energy from other more profitable areas.

Monetary cost

As with most things in an organisation, training has both direct and indirect monetary costs associated with it.

If we use the example of in-house training, where the senior and middle management draw up the training plans for the new employees and then spend time with them to make sure they learn the new skills and implement them properly, then this kind of training incurs an indirect cost. Cost that can be measured by the loss of productivity that occurs when senior staff have to devote their time to other matters.

If we use the example of hiring external companies to provide training in specialist areas where the management doesn't have expertise, then that adds a direct cost.

This tends to be the main reason why managers often opt to avoid or delay training their staff until there is a downturn in business, so things are more quiet, or until the additional training becomes critical and they denying it any further would cause to more problems.

It is suggested by Devi (Devi, 2012) that when managers are training their staff, whenever possible to consider training them in small batches as this reduces the overall impact on daily activities and allows to observe and compare the effectiveness of training against a control group (the staff who were excluded from the batch).

Staff turnover and training

Another issue that managers are faced when deciding on whether to provide training is the issue of staff leaving the organisation after receiving training. In such scenario all the time and resources invested in that employee is lost when he leaves.

Manager are specially weary of this because of the likelihood of employees leaving and joining and competing business. In such event the organisation that provided the training, not only lost the initial cost of training but will indirectly also end up giving their competitors an advantage at their cost.

Even when the trained employee decides to simply retire or move to an altogether different industry, when they leave they take with them any knowledge or skill gained from company provided training.

However, studies conducted by Curry et al (Curry, 2015) showed in reality there the more training staff were provided (in the particular setting of child welfare), the more staff left the job. Indicating that when people feel supported and given adequate training they are less likely to leave.

Costs in pursuing a individual development plan

The common factor between both training and personal (long term) development is the time and effort needed to carry it through.

While in a business setting training is handed down from top to bottom, thus ensuring that someone will be monitoring the employees progress and possibly reprimand when they fail to meet certain milestones. For an individual development the goals can become more confusing. And given that these are often long term in nature, the person in question can lose interest over time.

Also, while for short term training one does not have to worry about the skills being irrelevant in the long term. When planning for personal development, this also becomes an important consideration – will the skills of today still be required in the near future.

With support from a mentor some of these concerns can be addressed.

Benefits to the individual from receiving training

Broadening of career opportunities

Once an employee is better trained than others within his team, that employee can be relied on to provide guidance to his colleagues. This opens up the possibility to later be moved on to managerial positions.

It is also worth considering the dynamic nature of most businesses where as time goes on new skills are needed. Undergoing the adequate training can help existing employees fill in those skill gaps and by taking additional work they are in a better position to ask for a raise.

Not keeping up to date with the necessary skills may also result in that employee becoming redundant as time goes on and face being let go.

Job stability and security

A more trained employee is more valuable to an organisation because they bring in more skills that can be applied as needed by the business. This makes them less likely to be replaced as managers would be unwilling to let go of a valuable asset unless economic conditions were bad, and this ultimately gives them a higher job security than someone who did improve their skills.

And in the event of a well trained employee being let go, they are in a much better position to apply and be accepted at a new company. This is because training provides the individual with knowledge of how to do something and this is something that the individual takes with him.

Satisfaction

Becoming better at ones job by receiving further training is according to research carried out by Chiang et al (Chiang, 2015) also linked with increased levels of personal satisfaction. This then can lead to a better outlook of life work balance.

Some people, specially who have been at a particular job for a long time, may also start to feel bored of that job. In this situation, training can help them stay active and reduce the stresses of doing a repetitive job.

It should also be added, that being more secure and stable in the job market, being a stronger position to negotiate promotions and raises, and all of the benefits discussed above, can simply on their own create a positive feeling about self-actualization.

Development vehicles for training and development for organisations

In the last section of the report we discussed the benefits that an organisation and the employee gain from having personal development or training plans. In this section we will have a look at some practical examples of how this can be achieved in practice.

According Blatter et al (Blatter, 2016) hiring the right staff with the required skills it is common issue amongst companies. They often face shortage in the labour market or high competition between companies trying to hire the same person. Because of this Blatter proposes companies planning to maintaining a sustainable growth should look inward and focus on further developing the staff they already have, although this is a slower process than hiring someone new it give more control to company. The research also suggests that hiring new employees from external sources also adds an administrative cost overhead that makes internal training look much more favourable.

Taking a close and personal approach to training

Research conducted by Armstrong et al (Armstrong, 2018) found that presenting the training plan as a set of distinct objective tasks was the most effective. This of course requires some level of leasing with the employee to make sure both the business and employee are in agreement and happy with the objectives set.

If some of the objectives of the original training plan are not completely agreeable, the research found that allowing some flexibility by relaxing deadlines or changing some of the minor tasks to better suit the employees learning style is more productive than offering a strict schedule of things to do on a piece of paper.

The management should however ensure that any flexibility offered does not deviate from or extend the training period sufficiently, to a point where the organisation would suffer noticeable issues.

Providing support during the training process

Getting started with a training plan, be it internal or external, can be a straight forward process: a simple chat with the employee and off he goes with list of tasks. However, if the progression of those tasks isn't methodically observed and criticized it may be that the employee doesn't give them the appropriate attention or place the training plan in a lower priority category that it actually should be.

This can be achieved by setting regular meetings where the employee would be expected to give small reports on what his current progress has been achieved so far and of the difficulties encountered.

To further support and incentivise employees to complete their training plans the management can offer small rewards that mark completion of tasks.

Engaging employees more effectively with the training plan

If the training plan looks very similar to their everyday tasks it may put off some employees as they start to see it more of the old skills they knew. Sanchez-Gordon et al (Sanchez-Gordon, 2016) carried out research on how people perceive experiences, they focused in particular on training and development in professional settings, and found that exposing employees to a different style or environment while doing their jobs led to greater satisfaction. They relate this to how humans perceive different experiences and their conclusion is that giving a new kind stimulus can help some people remember things better.

Based on their findings they propose that when possible, sending the employees to attend conferences or open lessons or be trained in an online environment where they may interact with new people and questions may speed up and help retain the new skills gained from training.

This does add more cost to the training process and may not suitable to employees of all seniority levels. Perhaps better suited to senior managers if it requires paid travel out of office.

Example of a training plan for a restaurant employee

I chose a restaurant environment as this is an area where I have experience.

First step – analysing the skills the restaurant is lacking

Before a training plan is made, the manager would have to know what skills his chefs of waiters need to remain competitive with other restaurants.

For example, over the past few years health and safety regulations regarding to food preparation have changed a little bit. Most of the daily cooking tasks are unaffected by these changes, but the managers

decide that it would be a good idea to have someone trained in the new changes to legislature to reduce the chances of any accidental mistakes that may cost the restaurant their health inspection certifications.

The managers know that there have been changes but aren't themselves fully aware of what the changes are and because of this prefer to hire a specialist consultant to train the staff.

At this stage it also decided that only two of the more senior kitchen staff will be sent to training as they pose the lowest risk of leaving the restaurant in the near future and are thus the safest options for the business.

Step two – informing the employees of the training plan

The next step is to discuss the proposed training plan with the employees. Given that its an external consultancy is providing the training the managers need to decide on the best time and travel arrangements that work for both of the employees, to make sure that they have the support needed to make the most out of the training course.

A similar event happened in the restaurant I worked in and myself an my colleague were suggested to take the training course during August, when the restaurant usually sees slower activity, but my colleague had holidays planed for that that time. As a result we had to move the training course up early November.

Inconveniences such as these are likely to be observed in this stage and management should be prepared to offer some flexibility.

Step three – monitoring the training and its application

During the training phase it may be beneficial to ask the employees for short daily report on what they have learned, this would keep management in the loop and keep written documentation of the training received making it easier to pass on to other employees.

And once the training course is over management can monitor the work in kitchen to note any different methods used by the employees after training. And when important changes to health safety are identified making sure that those specific points are communicated with the remaining staff that weren't chosen for the training. This way they would get the most benefit out having a small batch being training at a time.

Conclusion

This was an interesting outlook on personal development and training. I always had a feeling that further training, development, education, etc, would add benefit to the individual putting in the effort to attain it. But having gone through the process and seeing from a broader picture it now makes more sense why sometimes managers have to make compromises.

Going forward, these are likely to be useful skills for me at work.

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