Employee Training in Digital Era

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Abstract: **Training is an important function in an organization. Training provides the necessary cutting edge to be competitive in the market place. Unfortunately, training is being considered a necessary evil in the corporate circles because of the cost involved and no tangible benefits in the short term. This paper discusses the dilemma of corporate training and the role of technology in training. In addition, this paper also discusses about how technology can be used for training and details a few technology based training methods. The paper concludes with a note that in future technology not only be able to identify training needs but also has the tremendous scope that big data analysis and Artificial intelligence would provide for more effective training.**

Index Terms: Training, Cost, Technology

1.INTRODUCTION

An organization has to face intense competition in the market place in terms of price, promotion, product features , brand power etc. One of the crucial parameters which determines the capacity of the organization to succeed in this hyper competitive market place is the ability of its employees to overcome the challenges of competition. This 'ability' is created and nurtured through training.

Training is considered one of the vital cogs in the wheel of organization success. Hence it is important to ensure that the training provided to the employee is practical, complete and ensure that what is learnt in the training session is implemented.

Unfortunately for trainers, in a 2011 study, the American Society for Training and Development had reported that American companies had spent around $156 billion in training but when employees returned to their work locations, more than 90% of the new competencies which were acquired in the training had been lost[1].

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this paper is to bring out the various training methodologies leveraging technology alongwith its associated strengths and constraints.

CORPORATE TRAINING IN INDIA

Corporate Training in India has long been associated with expensive travel and stay costs of employees and trainers, loss of work time when undergoing trainingand the journey time to and from the training venue to the employee's base location.

With profit margins under pressure due to a variety of reasons like competition, regulations, people's resistance, popularity of social media to carry news instantly across the world corporates are finding it a challenge to train their employees. Corporates are also acutely aware of the importance of training.

NEW AGE TRAINING

The importance of training need not be overemphasized. But at the same time it is also a fact that corporates are going around with a magnifying glass to spot any expenses / investments which is not providing the requisite return on investment. Training is one of the areas, where the results cannot be quantified. Hence the focus of the senior executives will be cutting down the cost incurred for the training programs.

It is a common fact that training employees means not only the direct costs associated with the training like trainers remuneration, venue cost and other administrative costs. The training cost also includes the cost of absence of employees from their respective responsibilities, the slow down in operations of the organization etc.

In order to balance these two contradictory positions of training, new ways to train employees were becoming a necessity. The developments in the field of communication technology has paved the way for using these developments in the training programs. Technology has made it possible for both the trainers and trainees to be free from face to face contacts yet be interactive with a human touch. This in turn has not only reduced the cost of training but also ensured that more number of employees get trained simultaneously. These training programs on technology platforms can also be reused several times irrespective of the presence of

the trainer. The popularity of these technology based training methods is further enhanced by integrating their hand held devises with the trainer and the trainee.

METHODS OF TRAINING USING TECHNOLOGY

There are basically two strands of training based on technology. One is the stored content like pre recorded training programs which can be accessed anytime and anywhere. The other is the live streaming of the training program with access to limited people as decided by the management. The limitation is due to communication bandwidth constraints.

VIDEO CONFERENCING

In this method of training, the face to face interaction is facilitated through a screen based presence of the trainer. The trainees can have direct interaction with the trainer by simply raising their hands and getting their points across or clarify their doubts.

The main advantage of this method is that the employees need not move from their respective locations. Other advantages include savings in cost, work not getting affected because of the absence of trainees, the cost associated with the hospitality for the trainer etc. Video conferencing allows for one to one interactions as well as group interactions.

The only cost associated is the telecom network charges which has anyway been falling consistently over the last few years.

Some of the popular video conferencing tools used are *Skype* and *gotomeetings*.

SIMULATION

Simulation has been associated with the usage of dummy data and practice the skills acquired in the training program. Data generation with live constraints is difficult and time consuming to generate in a simulated environment.
In technology based simulation, there are two computer monitors. In one of the monitors the training program is beamed and in the other monitor, the application of the training is practiced using live production data.

ONLINE ASSISTANCE

This is another technology based learning in which a trainer or expert is available online at a particular location. Employees working from various other locations can simply post their queries and get it answered by these experts. This can also be an excellent way of training needs identification. If several employees have doubts in the same category, then a full fledged training program can be designed.

PODCASTS

These are in the nature of stored training programs. The feeds for the training are downloaded by the employees at his convenience and undergo training. At the end of the training, an assessment can also be conducted to test the learning.

VIRTUAL WORKSPACE

In this method, several groups of employees at different locations assemble at a specified location in their office (usually a conference room) and start sharing their experiences, the challenges they faced and how they overcame the challenges. Since the discussion is among peers, the learning is very fast. Based on the interactions, best practices can be set as Standard Operating Procedures.

This method can also be used as a collaborative work space. Researchers can use this method to seek and provide advice to those who require it on specialized topics. This interactions provide a fillip to the employees morale and also expedite the work which otherwise would have slowed because the employees are stuck at a particular point.

CONCLUSION

The preceding sections dealt with new techniques of training. The future will depend a lot on training in a virtual environment.

As big data and artificial intelligence grows, personalized training will become the norm. In any training session, there will be some people who may not require, maybe about 50% of the training programs, due to their understanding and prior experience . When they are clubbed with others, then the resources for this unwanted training is considered a waste. Instead with big data and AI, the exact portions of the individual training needs could be identified and delivered (customized) rather than a general program.

Technology can also be used one step ahead i.e. in identifying the training needs. The need can arise due to repeated mistakes, introduction of a new product / concept, new regulations etc. Once the trainees are identified, a customized training program can be designed to ensure success of the training.

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