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Training Needs Assessment: Who, What, When, Where, Why & How

By Jonathan Klane, M.S.Ed., CIH, CHMM, CET & George W. Pearson, CSP, ARM

Training needs assessment is an often overlooked but important component of the training design and development process. On July 18, 2007, ASSE held a webinar on this topic titled "Training Needs Assessments: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How.". This article is a condensed version of the webinar transcript.

Learning objectives for this discussion of training needs assessment are:

- Explain the importance of performing training needs assessments.
- Describe the timing of a needs assessment.
- Describe how learning objectives flow from a needs assessment.
- List types of training needs assessments.
- Describe how to perform at least three different types of needs assessments.
- Choose an appropriate training needs assessment for future training.

A training needs assessment is the process by which we can determine what sort of knowledge, skills and/or abilities someone has that can be accomplished via some sort of learning means. It is a way of figuring out what needs the worker has that can be met with training.

We try to understand training needs because they are the first step in training design. It is the beginning of the design phase of training and development. But training may not always be the answer. Other non-training issues are often root causes for perceived problems.

A study published in a human resources journal asked the question, "Of eight problems brought to a training department, how many can actually be solved by training?" They found that it was only one of eight or 12.5 %. Other issues include resources, production, supervision, budget, behavior, distractions, equipment, morale, pay, incentives, quality and fatigue.

One of several organizations or persons supporting the organization typically conducts training needs assessments. Chronologically, there is the employer, a learning institution (such as a community college) and the trainer. For example, the employer might have engineered a new process or introduced a new product. As they are in the preparation phase, one area that will likely be identified is training. Someone will ask, "What about the employees' training

needs?" Then the employer might put together a training program based on those needs.

The employer might consider several elements for the training. If it is a new process, then the employees need training in the proper and safe operation of the process. The SH&E manager might also identify other health and safety issues such as process safety management. Someone might mention maintenance of the system, in which case lockout/tagout would also be identified as a training need.

Learning institutions like a community college might be involved. The employer might contact their local community college and ask them to assist in the identification of learning and training needs. For example, the community college might assist by performing a task analysis of the various steps necessary to work on the new process. They might conduct an anonymous education survey of the employees to assess the prevailing levels of literacy and math skills. They might perform a nominal group process on the sales force.

Training needs assessments are the entire basis for the training. Without a training needs assessment, you have no idea if you are conducting the right training for the right reasons and creating the right learning objectives. It all flows out of or from the training needs assessment. It is a step that really

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Training & Communications Branch Leadership

Cindy Lewis
Branch Chair
(713) 397-2030

BusyTXGal@comcast.net

Jonathan Klane
Branch Vice Chair
(207) 453-5348

jonathan@trainerman.com

Rennie Heath
Manager
ASSE Practice Specialties
(847) 768-3436

rh Heath@asse.org

Advisory Committee

Edmund B. Cordova, CSP
(713) 438-6441

Edmund.Cordova@Airliquide.com

Pamela Ferrante, CSP, CHMM
(412) 414-4769

pam@jcsafety.com

Awards & Honors Chair
Open

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Open

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Conference Chair**
Open

Website Coordinator
Open

Branch Chair's Message

Welcome to the first issue of the *The Communicator*! The Training & Communications Branch has existed for two years now, and it is becoming the fastest growing Branch or Practice Specialty. This shows that many safety, health and environmental professionals are in need of quality training information. And for most of us, information on effective communication is always welcomed!

I hope that we will be able to put together useful information for both new and "seasoned" trainers and to continue to learn from those "well-seasoned." The most effective way for us to help our membership is to hear from you. What information are you looking for? What training or communications topic causes you to wake up at night in a cold sweat? What can you share with others to make their jobs easier?

In each issue, we would like to feature a training/communications topic covering the basic training components in our "Topic of the Day" column. If you have specific expertise and can contribute a topic, we would love to have your input. Also, "Tips & Tales" will feature your stories from the front of the classroom and tips that you have discovered to make your training more fun, effective or just easier. Our first column will give you an idea of what you can contribute.

If you have something to share, please e-mail me, and we will work together to get it in the next issue. You need not be an experienced writer. ASSE staff can help format your ideas into a great article. If you know someone who would be a good interview candidate (including yourself), please let me know, and we will work with ASSE staff to conduct the interview.

Our first organizational conference call was held on November 5, 2007. Thank you to all who took time to call in and to give us your input—it was very valuable. We will be planning our next conference call soon, so watch for details through your e-mail. Conference calls will be held quarterly, and everyone is invited to participate or to listen in. Current projects include webinar topics and speakers, Professional Development Conference speakers and sessions and a white paper on the return on investment for training conducted in the workplace.

I look forward to meeting you over the next year! Happy Training!

Cindy Lewis
Training & Communications Branch Chair



Training Needs Assessment (continued from page 1)

cannot be skipped. It is the very first step in creating the training—without it, there is no second step.

One may think that if OSHA prescribes specific training, why is a needs assessment required? OSHA standards typically say to train the employees on the nature of the hazards that they could face. But even OSHA discusses the need for training needs assessments. This guidance can be found in OSHA document 2254, "Training Requirements in OSHA Standards and Training Guidelines." It is available at <http://www.osha.gov/Publications/osa2254.pdf>. OSHA asks to determine if training is needed, and if so, how to go about determining needs based on hazards.

No matter what type of training, it is important to follow good adult learning principles. Whether it is safety training, equipment training, supervisory training or sexual harassment prevention training, it is still training.

Adult learners are typically self-directed, they want to learn things of an immediate need or nature, it must be directly applicable, they want to be involved in setting the agenda, they want to draw on their experiences, they want to solve problems, they want flexibility in discussions and they want participation.

Unfortunately, training needs assessments are perhaps the most frequently omitted step in training development. Clearly, they are a vital part of training design, but why are they not often done? It is believed it is because many employers are not well-versed in the science and practice of training, and

many people who perform training do not have a formal background in it. They have been "promoted" into it.

Training needs assessments can be done in-house or by outside trainers. Let's say that you are an in-house trainer, meaning a trainer who trains the employees of the company for which he or she works. They work where the employees work and see what the employees see. They can go out into the workplace and analyze the tasks, interview the workers and talk with the supervisors, engineers, etc. They can then analyze all the data and use it to assess their training needs.

An outside trainer or consultant does not have the luxury of working with the employees on a daily basis. A few things are needed. First, ask the client if a training needs assessment has been performed. Ask this in terms that are more easily understood by the average non-trainer because they may not know what a training needs assessment is. For example, "Have you looked at the tasks to determine exactly what the training needs are?" Such an approach to questioning sounds like you are telling the client that this is a necessary step even if they have not done it yet. As a consultant, you will do it for them. More typically however, they have identified some sort of training need, like hazard communication.

With regard to hazcom training, what are the employee's training needs? More information is needed to determine the exact scope of work, and you should ask for details such as how many employees are in each session, how many sessions

there are and how long each session is. Ask about the chemicals that they use. Do they have a written hazcom program with the required chemical inventory, and can you see a copy of it? That information gives you an idea of their chemical use and the hazards they face.

If a trainer is thrust into a training course with no advance warning, an impromptu training needs assessment can be done. In this assessment, you start the class by introducing yourself. Then you ask the trainees to introduce themselves and to be prepared to briefly state what they must learn in the class. You are in effect asking the students to tell you their training needs.

Keep in mind that adult learners want to be directly involved in setting the training agenda and in establishing their training goals. Adults are usually self-directed learners who must have the learning apply directly to their lives and address what they need to know now, not later. The impromptu training needs assessment is not a substitute for a well-designed and well-performed training needs assessment; it is more of an adjunct to one.

Training needs assessments include initial analysis types like Front-End Analysis, Task Analysis and Competency Analysis. Different group assessment types include the Delphi Technique, Nominal Group Process, Assessment Center Technique and Reflection on Practice. Survey types include Educational Needs, Employee Attitude, Customer and Problem. There are also the Organizational Audit and the Individual Needs



interview. Let's take a look at one type of training needs assessment from each general type or group.

Task Analysis seems to be the most frequently used training needs assessment. It analyzes each task performed by the workers and identifies potential training needs. Each task is broken down into its individual steps. Then each step is analyzed for a variety of factors such as worker skills, equipment, communication, language and literacy and SH&E issues.

With respect to language and literacy, you must ask if the workers speak English and if the workers are literate in English or in their own language. Can they functionally read instructions, labels, MSDSs, warnings, SOPs, etc?

Workers, supervisors and trainers are all involved in a task analysis.

To begin, you must assess if the worker already has some level of skills or abilities in the task. Too often, the worker's existing skills level is overlooked. First, look at the worker to see if he or she is already able to do the work and to do it correctly. If one were to ignore a worker's existing skills in the task, it would be a total waste of time, effort and training to retrain him or her in an ability that they already have. It also flies in the face of good training or adult learning principles not to acknowledge the trainee's pre-existing knowledge or abilities. To evaluate the worker's previous skills, you should have them demonstrate it under controlled or safe conditions.

In summary, each task is boiled down into steps, and the steps are analyzed for applicable factors, keeping in mind a worker's previous skill set. Then we take these analyses, and if they can be

accomplished by training, we can identify individual training needs. From each training need, we create one or more learning objectives for that particular training component.

For example, let's say that we have a new process, such as emptying bags of some powder into a mixing hopper. The worker must lift the bag, open it and pour it into the hopper. The worker must be able to properly lift the bag, cut it open properly, pour it in correctly and dispose of the empty bag. Strictly from the safety side, the learning needs are training in proper lifting, proper use of a cutter and perhaps PPE use. PPE assumes that the powder is not good to breathe or to get on your clothes and body.

This example comes from a real case study. The worker had developed a rash around his front midsection. He was lifting and opening the bags in a way that he thought exposed him to the powder despite a heavy rubber apron and long gloves. As it turned out, he was diagnosed with malaria, more commonly known as heat rash or prickly heat.

By observing the process, interviewing the worker and talking with the medical professional, we were able to determine the cause. The solution was to retrain him to lift and open it in a different manner so as not to repeatedly rub it against his midsection.

Another type of training needs assessment is the group assessment. The Delphi Technique typically requires explanation in every train-the-trainer course. It is more like the Nominal Group Process done at a distance. For example, the Delphi Technique would look at the traits necessary to be an effective trainer, involve sending out questionnaires to a

variety of subject matter experts and query for the traits or characteristics necessary to be an effective trainer. When the results are returned, the data is summarized. The data would likely look like a bell curve with some traits commonly mentioned and some traits infrequently cited. Then the more common or frequent responses are taken. You should discount any responses that were outliers (given by only a few). Then resend this new summary of data with only the most common responses and ask the experts to respond again, but this time, restrict their options to the list sent. This is taking the most common choices and refining them. Depending on the data, we might resend it once or twice more to get our "top traits" for an effective trainer. Then the next step gives us our list of training needs from which we derive learning objectives if appropriate.

The Nominal Group Process is basically the Delphi Technique done with a group of people all together in one room, similar to a captive audience or focus group.

Employee Attitude Surveys can be fraught with problems, but done correctly, they can provide useful data. The survey can be an anonymous paper or e-survey with specific choices or a series of face-to-face, confidential, one-on-one interviews.

Typically, a driving force or reason is behind the Employee Attitude Survey. A survey tool is then designed around the issue. Questions are crafted to determine the root cause of the issue. As with most surveys, it must be anonymous for respondents to feel totally comfortable to reply in confidence.

For example, let's say that a company was concerned about its



training programs, maybe after hearing some negative feedback. In response, it might design an employee attitude survey. The questions in the survey are about the employees' attitudes or perceptions about the company's training. You are looking for typical responses. Just like with the Delphi Technique, you look for the more common replies. You can limit the responses to the options given or ask for comments that can be offered as replies.

Employee Attitude Surveys can be confidential, one-on-one or face-to-face interviews, and the same sort of impetus or construct usually occurs, which means asking for their perception of the problem. The company can bring in an independent third party to design and conduct the interviews. The company lets all employees know that the interviews are important and confidential.

Interviews should be conducted in a comfortable, convenient and private location. Employees are selected from as wide a variety of departments and up and down the ladder as possible. The important thing is that the company not "cherry pick" the employees to bias any of the answers.

In each interview, the interviewer will try to put the employee at ease, explain the purpose and how the interview will run and ask if the employee has any questions. Then the interviewer eases into a series of questions. "Ease into it" means that we start gradually with questions that help make the interviewee comfortable. For example, "Is this location okay?" "How are you doing?" "What do you know about the purpose of the interviews and study?" You do not want to jump right into it and say, "Tell me what you think about the

company's training." By feeling out the employee, you are looking at their responses to see how they are reacting to questions, e.g., are they being curt or short in their replies or are they willing to talk freely and at length? Also, look at their body language. Are they defensive with arms crossed or are they open and free with their gestures? The questions are rather open-ended as opposed to the closed-ended and limited choices of the paper or e-survey tool. Given a large enough data set of employees, you can get usable information and can draw conclusions

I conducted an employee attitude survey as part of a safety program review for a medium-sized contractor. I interviewed over 100 employees from all departments and laborers on up to the company president. I was able to see patterns or trends in responses that pointed to many areas, several of which were about their training program. The training program was lacking in many areas and in structure in general, especially among workers as opposed to superintendents and foremen.

Specific problems were identified with some recent forklift training they had done. The training was typically perfunctory. Some groups never got to do any hands-on training with the forklift, and other groups that did hands-on did not use the forklift type that they would use on the job.

The last two training needs assessments were audits and individual needs. Audits are very much like the audits that so many SH&E professionals do as part of their regular work practice, but they are focused on training. I conducted an audit of a social service company's training programs—no problems were identified, they just

wanted to get some proactive feedback. Some injuries had occurred among staff, and they wanted to see if training played a role. I first reviewed their existing training program materials. Then I sat in on some of their training classes strictly as a non-participating observer, and it went well. I found that their training program was in good shape and that their lead trainer was quite competent. There were no major deficiencies so much as they had some gaps and areas that could stand to be tweaked a little bit. A little bit with objectives, conduct of exercises, opportunities for student feedback, etc.

Audits had significant issues. One was an industrial hygiene training audit for a utility. Routine areas were well-covered, but non-routine areas were absent. For example, they had a mechanic who sandblasted every once in a while, and they were not even aware of it. So I pointed out the need for silica exposure/silicosis prevention training.

In another case, a manufacturer brought on a new process line, and I conducted a PSM training audit. The plant used tons of chlorine—train car tanks full came right to the plant.

Their emergency response training directed employees to shelter-in-place in the existing cafeteria in the event of a release. The plan seemed sound, but no one had checked on the space. It was not big enough to physically fit everyone. It was measured, and it was clear that it lacked space for all employees. They replied that they would be using the brand new, soon-to-come-on-line cafeteria and would update the training accordingly. The new space was examined, and it was still a bit tight,



but it fit everyone. However, anyone with claustrophobia would have a problem.

Chlorine exposure was the major issue. The cafeteria was single-story with fresh air HVAC intakes on its roof. It was nestled into a corner of the manufacturing building, which was two stories, and the chlorine line went across the roof. In the event of a catastrophic release, the chlorine cloud would have rolled down onto the cafeteria roof and would have been sucked into the fresh air vents. They did not have any detectors, alarms or automated shutdown of the HVAC vents.

Individual needs assessment is essential. You look at one individual and assess or evaluate all of their training needs. Included are their basic educational needs, their job needs, their discrete task needs, their equipment needs, their tool and supply needs, their supervisory needs, their professional development needs and their SH&E needs.

These assessments are done mostly one-on-one. An assessment center might perform the educational needs assessment at a community college of the local adult education program.

For example, a company started a line for a new product, and they needed to bring in workers as laborers. In the available pool, many were not fluent in English or literate in their own language. They also had poor math skills.

They did the assessment on each, developed an educational needs list and brought in adult educators to help with basic adult education and English as a second language. To make the needs assessment a bridge to learning objectives, the training needs become learning objectives or abilities that the worker/trainee will be able to do after the training.

In the forklift example, the training need was that workers had to be able to safely and proficiently drive a specific type of forklift. At the end of the training, workers would be able to demonstrate the safe operation of the forklift with no driving errors. It is surprising how often learning objectives are either ill-prepared or not prepared at all.

Learning objectives are the next step in the design and development of training. It will be the topic of a follow-up paper and an ASSE webinar.

Jonathan Klane, M.S.Ed., CIH, CHMM, CET is owner and founder of Klane's Education Information Training HubSM (KEITHSM) in Fairfield, ME. He is a frequent speaker at national and regional conferences, and he has written many articles and textbook chapters on training and industrial hygiene. Klane is the Vice Chair of the Training and Communications Branch. He holds a master of science degree in adult education with a concentration in training and development. Klane can be reached at jonathan@trainerman.com or via his website www.TrainerMan.com.

George W. Pearson, CSP, ARM is the Corporate Health and Safety Manager for SunCom Wireless, a regional wireless telecommunications carrier operating in five Southeastern States and Puerto Rico. Pearson has been a member of the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) for 34 years and is currently a professional member. He is a past Administrator of the Risk Management and Insurance Practice Specialty, a mentor to the Training and Communications Branch and a founding member of the International Practice Specialty. He is currently a member of the Society's Professional Development Conference Committee. Pearson holds a master of arts degree in safety management from New York University's School of Education and a bachelor degree from Fordham University.

Training Resources

1. *Active Training, 3rd Edition* by Mel Silberman. Pfeiffer at www.pfeiffer.com, available from John Wiley & Sons, ISBN 0-7879-7623-7.
2. *Creative Training Techniques Handbook, 3rd Edition* by Robert W. Pike, CSP, CPAE. HRD Press at www.hrdpress.com 800-822-2801, ISBN 0-87425-723-9.
3. "Training Requirements in OSHA Standards and Training Guidelines," OSHA Publication 2254, <http://www.osha.gov/Publications/osha2254.pdf>.
4. *Designing and Delivering Effective Environmental Training* by Susan M. McMaster, CIT, Published by National Environmental Safety and Health Training Association (NESHTA) www.neshta.org, Product Code: DDET.
5. "Accepted EHS Training Practices – An Implementation Guide (Implementing the ANSI/ASSE Z490.1: Criteria for Accepted Practices in Safety, Health, and Environmental Training)," Principal Author: Susan M. McMaster, CIT, Published by National Environmental Safety and Health Training Association (NESHTA), order through Business & Legal Reports www.blr.com, ISBN 1-880998-30-8.



6. *Safety Training That Delivers: How to Design and Present Better Technical Training* by Sheila Cullen Cantonwine. Published by American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) www.asse.org, PLU #49, ISBN 1-885581-29-7.
7. *Tell Me a Story: Using Narrative to Teach Safety to Skilled Blue Collar Workers* by Ellen Cullen, Ph.D. ecullen@cdc.gov. Published by NIOSH, pub# 2005-152 <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/mining/pubs/pdfs/tmasu.pdf>.
8. *Training & Development* magazine, published by the American Society for Training & Development (ASTD) www.astd.org, ISSN 1055-9760.
9. *Training* magazine, published by Lakewood Publications, Inc. ISSN 0095-5892.
10. There are many online resources easily found by searching using “training needs assessment” as the key words.

Tips & Tales

“I conduct training internationally, so I often work through translators. This is always interesting, especially if the translator has some knowledge of the topic. You say one sentence, and the translation takes five minutes. You talk for five minutes, and the translation is one short sentence. In one case, the translator was a locally hired person whose job was safety. I was teaching safe lifting and reviewing how moving a load away from the body greatly increases lower back pressure. This was the second such class of the day, and the translator had translated the morning class. In the middle of this section, he stopped, turned to me and asked, ‘Is that right? If so, that is amazing!’ What do you say at that point? I still wonder what he actually told the earlier class.” — *Terry C.*

“I was teaching HAZCOM and discussing the NFPA 704 diamond. As a visual aid, I used a diamond that featured words within colored squares. The font was relatively small, but the front row could read it. I asked the class what the blue color represented. A man in the front row answered my question. It was obvious he had read from the diamond. I responded, ‘Good eye,’ and everyone laughed. It was not that funny, so I asked what I had missed. Turned out he only had one eye—the other one was glass. Awkward!” — *Mike M.*

“Several years ago, I was training a group of people whose primary language was Spanish, but they were learning English. Throughout the presentation, I referred to the group as ‘you guys.’ After a few minutes, one of the group members spoke up and said they were ‘not gay.’” — *Tricia K.*

“My company provides four-day, traveling safety and environmental training. As lead instructor, this course takes up six days of my time. One day before the training for travel and to set up the road show; four days of training and one day to take it down, pack it up, ship it and travel home—fatiguing. Right in the middle of my presentation near the end of day four, a cell phone rings. It was a marching band tune, and I did not immediately recognize that the ringing phone was mine since I am careful to have my phone on vibrate or turned off. I stopped class to wait for the ‘rude employee’ to quiet their phone. Finally, I realized the ringing was coming from my phone. Embarrassed and exhausted, I commented to the class, ‘Wow, there’s a marching band in my pants!’ I could not believe what came out of my mouth. Thankfully, the entire class found humor in the situation, and we all laughed. That happened four years ago, and I still get a gentle ‘ribbing’ about it from time to time.” — *Edmund C.*

“Our corporate training center was conducting classes for new hires that are conducted over a four-day period. This happened on the first day of class. Management thought the message had been conveyed properly to all divisions concerning class start times and appropriate attire. So you can imagine the surprise that the instructor and others in the class had when one of the young gentlemen showed up for training in his pajamas, which of course included fuzzy slippers! “— *John K.*

Do you have a tip or tale to share? Send your stories and tips to Branch Chair, [Cindy Lewis](#).



Training “Seasoned Citizens”: An Interview with Michael Brady, Ph.D.



In this interview, Michael Brady, Professor of Adult Education at the University of Southern Maine, offers his views on

workplace training and adult learning.

What special issues or needs do seniors have with respect to workplace training and adult learning?

There is one important issue I want to raise right away. Not all older persons are alike, nor do they learn similarly. This sounds like a ridiculously obvious statement, but I am constantly amazed by how society likes to lump people together, stereotype and act on the stereotype by treating everyone as if they were the same. I often find myself saying that a group of ten older persons is more heterogeneous than a group of ten younger ones. Why? Because each older person has had more time to become herself or himself. So this is an important cautionary note that will affect everything I say in this interview.

That said, there are a few things that I think are important to keep in mind when training older persons in the workplace. Adult education principles and practices work very well with most “seasoned citizens” (I much prefer this language to the more common “senior citizens”). Allow them to take responsibility for their own learning. Let them build new learning upon past learning. Honor their experience. Of course, these practices work

nicely with the majority of young workers too. But in a society that has long been and continues to be ageist, we sometimes de-value the aging process and manage to forget that older persons are very much responsible, experienced, and in many cases, talented adults.

What should workplace trainers do to improve training for seniors?

Involve them in every way possible in orchestrating their own learning. Use the basic principles laid out decades ago by the late, great adult educator Malcolm Knowles in a theory he called “Andragogy.” Simply put, andragogy involves learners in the planning, implementation and evaluation of their own learning and treats the adult learner as a full partner in the entire process.

I am a big fan of allowing for choices wherever possible. Some older workers may prefer to read or be lectured to as preferred way of learning. Others do better with a hands-on approach. I am thinking here of the famous “Learning Styles” research that has been carried out by Howard Gardner and others. We do not all learn the same way.

And, going back to the point I made earlier, we can assume even greater individuation and heterogeneity among seasoned citizens than we can among younger persons.

What shouldn’t workplace trainers do when training seniors?

I think there are a number of bad practices when working with older learners. Forcing them into narrow models or pathways. Being disrespectful of their experience. Evaluating what is learned by timed tests and/or other assessments. One of the most consistent findings in gerontology research is that reaction time slows down with aging. Timed tests do not work particularly well with many adult learners and can be devastating to the older learner who may have learned new ideas or skills very well but may not be able to report or demonstrate this learning quickly.

Do you believe seniors learn differently from young adults? Why or why not?

This is not a question I can easily answer. In some ways, they do. I have already mentioned processing time. Older persons tend to be a little slower. They also have more lived experience, which means that new learning has to be filtered through those experiences and, in some cases, old and well-entrenched learning needs to be unlearned before new material can be assimilated. Older people also have well-practiced ways of learning that may be difficult to change. I know some who love to listen to lectures and believe that they learn well by this traditional methodology, while there are others who prefer to be left on their own to figure out a problem or to learn new material.

In each case, the methodology has succeeded, which is why they



persist with it. This gets back to the point I mentioned earlier about providing choices.

Do seniors often require special accommodations for training (such as vision or hearing assistance)?

Sensory acuteness does decline with aging. Of special importance in learning are sight and hearing. I am editing a new journal with an audience of older readers, and we have had to be careful about both font size and the spaces between lines. A number of colleges that have lifelong learning institutes (i.e. special programs for persons over the age of 50) have invested in sound enhancement systems in the classrooms most often used by older students. Trainers who use PowerPoint slides written in small fonts risk communicating poorly with all of their trainees. But the probability is great that a substantial proportion of the older learners in the room will be unable to read these slides.

It is always good adult education practice to check in with learners. Are they hearing and seeing what is going on? Are the ideas presented clearly? How is the pace of the training? What (specifically) are they learning? Is what they are learning helping them in their job? This is not rocket science. But I am amazed at the number of educators and trainers who do not bother to check in with their

learners by asking these or similar questions.

How can trainers help seniors reduce their risks of occupational injuries or accidents?

I do not have experience or expertise in this area. What comes to mind as common sense approaches are to have good lighting, stay away from area rugs or other floor surfaces that might invite falls and do not force employees to rush their work (especially in an industrial environment). I keep hearing stories about computer-related injuries. Make sure workstations meet healthy ergonomic standards and also encourage workers to take frequent breaks from their workstations.

What do you believe are the most effective ways to train those who train seniors in the workplace?

First, I would like to advocate for more "peer teaching" in workplaces. Have older workers train other older workers. The peer teaching model has been tried in nearly all of the lifelong learning institutes in the United States and in Universities of the Third Age in Europe and elsewhere. It works beautifully.

Second, if younger trainers need to be employed in this role, it is important that they approach the older worker respectfully. Once

again, the persistent ageism in our society often creates an undercurrent of negative feelings about older persons that may leak through and contaminate a training situation. Hiring a gerontologist to conduct a basic orientation to aging for trainers may help to obviate this issue and create a healthier context for training.

How can seniors make the most of their workplace training?

Research has shown that older persons make dependable and productive workers. With rare exceptions, seasoned citizens are serious, have a good work ethic and bring a breadth and depth of experiences to the job. While they will not have the physical strength and energy of younger persons, the vast majority of older workers are highly motivated to excel and will learn what they need to in order to do well.

Creating a training environment of respect, choice and salience between the training and the work itself and involving as closely as possible the experiences of the older worker will help to ensure both efficiency and effectiveness in training.

Biography

E. Michael Brady, Ph.D. is a Professor of Adult Education and a Senior Research Fellow at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Southern Maine.

Did you know...

That you have access to over 30,000 safety, health and environmental professionals and practitioners through the ASSE Forums? Log on through the "Members Only" section at www.asse.org and post your question.

The T&C Branch is interested in hosting a "Roundtable Discussion" at the 2008 PDC in Las Vegas. If you would like to participate in a discussion about training and training issues, please contact [Jonathan Klane](mailto:Jonathan.Klane@asse.org) and let us know what issues you would like to hear discussed.



ANSI Z490.1: An Overview for Trainers

By Jonathan Klane

Does your organization have a Hazard Communication program? Sure it does. What about an emergency action or response plan? “Of course,” you say. A lockout/tagout program? Most likely. Other safety, health and environmental (SH&E) programs and plans? I bet you answered “yes” to all four questions.

What about a written SH&E training program? Now I bet you answered “no,” and that is unfortunate because, as with the written plans you said you have, you should also have a written SH&E training plan.

Without a written plan on SH&E training, how will you know that the training is correct, consistent, well developed and delivered and effective? Most likely, you will not or do not know. In the book *Alice in Wonderland*, the Cheshire Cat asked Alice, “If you don’t know where you’re going, how will you know when you get there?” How will you know when your organization “gets there” in training? You probably will not know—that is where an SH&E training plan comes in.

If you plan to develop an SH&E training plan or program, would you use an existing standard that is credible, well developed and well accepted? “Sure I would,” you say. You will be glad to know that an SH&E training standard exists—ANSI/ASSE Z490.1: Criteria for Accepted Practices in Safety, Health and Environmental Training. This standard has been accepted since 2000 and is a comprehensive standard for any SH&E training.

Even if you do not think that you need an SH&E training program, you still conduct SH&E training. Hazcom, LOTO, BBPs, noise/hearing conservation, HAZWOPER, PRCSS, fire, EAP, ERP...it seems the list goes on and on. OSHA lists required training topics, but they do not tell you how to do the training. That is where the Z490 standard comes in. It details training issues and guidelines from development to delivery to evaluation and documentation.

Looking for a “best practice” in SH&E training or an “accepted practice?” Want your hazcom training to be “effective training” as OSHA now requires and any good trainer of course wants? Looking for standardized methods for evaluation and documentation? Z490.1 has it.

The standard features two columns, Standard Requirements and Explanatory Information. The standard contains seven sections, three annexes and two checklists.

They are as follows:

- Section 1—Scope, purpose and application
- Section 2—Definition
- Section 3—Training Program Administration and Management
- Section 4—Training Development
- Section 5—Training Delivery
- Section 6—Training Evaluation
- Section 7—Documentation and Recordkeeping
- Annex A—References
- Annex B—Training Course Development Guidelines
- Annex C—Training Delivery

- Appendix C—SH&E Trainer’s Checklist and Day of Training Checklist

Section 1: This section gives the range of applicability and where to use the standard.

Section 2: Everything from “certificate” to “trainer” is defined in this section.

Section 3: This section details responsibility and accountability for the training program and discusses appropriate resources and evaluation.

Section 4: This section discusses needs assessments, learning objectives, course design.

Section 5: This section discusses trainer criteria, subject matter expertise, continuing education, class management, planning and preparation, delivery skills and adult learning principles.

Section 6: This section covers evaluation of the trainee (and their new skills), the training (and its effectiveness) and the trainer (and their impression on the trainees).

Section 7: This section discusses what records to keep and how to document them.

Annex A: This annex gives a wide range of training references from ISO, ANSI, NIOSH, OSHA, IACET and ASTD.

Annex B: This annex discusses course development and expands on Section 4.



Annex C: This annex expands on Section 5 by explaining what makes for an effective trainer.

Appendix C: This “trainer’s checklist” is included as part of Annex C.

Appendix C: This “Day of Training Checklist” covers topics such as training location, audiovisual equipment and trainer’s image. Perhaps you have noticed that it is really about any training or adult learning, so you should be able to incorporate other training (e.g., human resources, quality, etc.) into your program or plan as well as into your SH&E training.

An implementation guide is also available as a supplement the standard.

To purchase the Z490.1 standard, visit ASSE’s website at <http://www.asse.org>.

Gaining Commitment Through Influencing & Collaborating with Others

By Julius E. Rhodes, SPHR, MSIR, BSBA

When it comes to making the final decision on issues that involve the interaction and coordination between several units within an organization, the ideas members of the safety profession offer are often not fully recognized. This may play a major role in why those same recommendations are not tangibly incorporated into the final work product. The fact that we are still talking about safety being marginalized in many companies is amazing when you consider the staggering amount of evidence that is present regarding the cost, monetarily and non-monetarily, of

non-compliance with safety initiatives designed to protect organizations and individuals. This also plays into the public perception of a firm as well.

Given this as a backdrop against which many safety professionals must live, the question now becomes, “How do I get people within the organization and externally to not only buy into various safety recommendations, but to boldly support them?” Further, “How do I get them to offer this support when and where it is needed?” I am sure many of us have asked ourselves these questions, especially after we had witnessed “backroom” support only to have it fizzle out when the discussion was brought to the larger table and in front of individuals who may have a more bottom line-oriented view of the issues.

While there is no best answer for addressing this dilemma, I would like to suggest the following. Each of us must undergo a thorough examination of the way we attempt to use the tools required to effectively influence and collaborate with others and how others use these tools. It can provide us with valuable insights. Within this framework, four distinct areas must be paid attention.

First, this process requires us to understand what we mean by influence and collaboration.

Second, it requires us to conduct a self-assessment to see if we possess the requisite skills that will allow us to properly affect the traits we desire to obtain.

Third, it requires keen observational skills to be able to detect the presence of these skills in others.

Once we have completed this, we

must be able to put into practice the various components so that we can implement them and obtain our desired results.

We must see what needs to be done, say something to the people who might be in a position to assist us in our efforts and do something proactive to make things happen.

All of us at some point have successfully had our ideas heard. However, anybody can do anything once. The ability to achieve success requires that we be able to replicate those outcomes on a consistent basis, not just once or sporadically.

Let us look at what is meant by influence and collaboration. Then we shall be able to proceed in a systematic and logical fashion with regard to rightfully establishing the importance of safety as a major contributor to the well being of our organizations and to the people we serve.

When we consider the term “influence,” we are involved in a discourse that concerns itself with the process of affecting the thoughts, behaviors and feelings of another person(s). If we left this as a stagnant situation, we would not have a full understanding of the impact or the potential impact of this word. However, we cannot stop here because the ability to influence others occurs in a dynamic state. As such, we must explicate a deeper understanding of this term if we hope to be able to apply it consistently to achieve the results we desire.

To reach this outcome, think about this statement, “In the beginning was the Word.” The word I speak of is in the context of the human word, which is represented by our ability to communicate verbally with one another. I am sure that no one



reading this article would ever doubt the significance that the spoken word has added to our existence. However, this significance is also clouded by the various filters that each of us has as it relates to our ability to understand the spoken word in the manner in which the person communicating to us intended. In fact, we communicate as much through gestures and grunts than we do with words. When we communicate, each of us must be more conscious of not just what words we choose, but how we communicate unconsciously through our movements. We also must be concerned about our tone because it conveys, in the belief of some linguists, as much as 55% of the meaning imparted to our statements by those who receive the communication.

As safety professionals, we sometimes fall into the trap of communicating through the narrow lens of safety-specific language. Given our backgrounds, we are comfortable with this style of communicating, but it does not endear others to our causes or to us. As a result, we must learn another way of presenting our position, which will allow those we are attempting to influence to more fully value our message because they can see the value we place on the relationship.

This is especially important when you consider three possible influence outcomes:

- Resistance
- Compliance
- Commitment

We have all encountered resistance. This occurs when the viewpoint you advance or the position you take on a matter meets with contention from someone who holds an opposing point of view or

position. Resistance is a natural part of life, but it is how we handle resistance that will either allow us to attract people in support of our position or to repel them.

If you can overcome the resistance in situations, then you will arrive at a juncture where people are willing to comply with the proposition you advocate. While compliance is good, it is not bold support that is needed to ensure your ability to replicate success on a consistent basis. In most situations, people comply with a matter because non-compliance carries the inherent risk of punishment.

A former co-worker of mine would often say during employee orientations that safety rules are written in blood. The rationale behind this, he explained, is that if people and organizations had paid attention to issues prior to their occurrence, then unsafe acts and resulting injuries could have been prevented. However, since they did not, there was usually a resultant “loss of blood” that made it necessary to establish a safety policy or procedure to address the incident. Compliance is not a bad thing, and in some cases, it might be the most you can hope for.

However, if compliance is all you pursue, you will never be great, and frequently, you will dip below the acceptable level you desire. This represents a movement similar to an oscilloscope, where in the end the amount of variation between the upper and lower control limits is such that everything evens out. No safety professional, organization or person should desire to be in a position where things even out. The goal should be to aspire to be the best.

If you want to be the best, then there is only one influence outcome

that will motivate your actions—gain the commitment from the constituents with whom you interact. Commitment allows these individuals to provide the bold support of the initiatives that you see as worthwhile and essential in making your organization a model of excellence each time it comes into contact with members who use your services.

How do we get the commitment that will allow us to move our ideas forward in such a manner that others will boldly support them? The solution lies in individual excellence and relationships. As an individual, you must demonstrate the following:

- Flexibility in dealing with others
- Integrity beyond reproach
- A positive and realistic approach to situations
- Speak inclusively

Flexibility—All of us have a preferred way of handling situations. However, if we are identified as obstinate or hard to work with, then we cannot gain the commitment we need from others.

Integrity—People want to know that you will honor your commitments, because if you do, they will usually follow suit.

Positive Realism—When approaching any new situation, you should do so with a positive and realistic approach. People who accomplish great things do so expecting a positive outcome before they encounter the situation. Finally, the greatest need any person has is to be recognized.

Inclusivity—When you speak inclusively and involve others, it generates a sense of camaraderie. This makes it possible for people to willingly exert that extra effort that can carry your ideas over the top.



When it comes to relationships, you need the support of others to make your dreams a reality. Therefore, you will need to keep these things in mind when building a relationship:

- There is a cost in every relationship. If people perceive that the costs outweigh the benefits, they will look elsewhere
- People need to feel valued
- To the extent you stay in contact with others, versus just when you need them, you endear commitment
- Always provide opportunities to hear what the other person has to say

Collaboration begins where influence ends and for our purposes is defined as a commitment to work together to resolve issues based on the notion that it is possible to meet one's own needs, the needs expressed by others and the organization. Through collaboration, we provide the opportunity to address critical issues while also improving the relationship between organizational stakeholders. In this framework, we go beyond the traditional win-win scenario to a win-win-win exchange whereby all stakeholders are considered.

The style that is most likely to yield long-term beneficial results is one where there is recognition that the ability to influence and collaborate with others does not exist solely through position power but also through personal power. It requires coaches and leaders who are proactive and are not afraid to get on the field and get "dirty" with their team members. Individuals who consistently display this style will be able to gain the commitment they need to not only meet their objectives, but to exceed them. If you do not have the ability to get things done through others in a way that makes them feel positive about

their interaction with you, ultimately you and your organization will fail to achieve the success it wants.

While it is advisable to use the strategies of influence and collaboration when dealing with others, it is not a panacea. Also, you will rarely find that you can apply one approach and have it succeed in all situations. While influence and collaboration usually work hand in hand, they also can be used separately.

Influence also has other components that impact your ability to be recognized as a person of influence, such as authority (the right perceived or actual) to influence another. Also, there is the notion of power, which is the ability (real or perceived) to influence another. If someone does not believe you possess the authority or power to influence them or they are just predisposed against working with you, then trying to influence and collaborate with them may be just another way of setting yourself up for manipulation.

Collaboration should be used:

- To find solutions when both parties' concerns are too important to be compromised
- When a long-term relationship between the parties is important
- To gain commitment of all parties by building consensus
- When the other person is willing to take a collaborative approach

If you look at these situations, vis-à-vis your own organizations, I am sure that each of us can think of many instances that would appropriately fit within the areas that we seek to identify. That said, you must still proceed with caution.

Since I have further defined what influence is and when to use

collaboration, let us discuss how our choice of language impacts our relationships. When we must work with and through others, certain words can turn people off almost instantaneously. The first word is "I." Think about situations in which you have been involved and instead of receiving recognition for your contributions to the overall success of a project, what you hear most frequently is someone saying "I." This is what "I" did or "I" made it possible for them or "I" came up with the critical element.

When it comes to human nature, the greatest need that any individual has is to be recognized. Also, people are emotional, and emotions are not logical. The more you do of the first then potentially the less you will have to do of the second. To be effective in the areas of influence and collaboration, you must be able to allow people to feel valued in the process and encourage their heart. The more you understand how your word choice can have undesired consequences, the better you can tailor your communication so that it will be received in a positive manner.

To be truly effective communicators, we must understand that our ability to communicate verbally has two primary attendant conditions: content and delivery. Content relates to what is said while delivery is the manner in which it is said. Think of these two areas together as the music of communication. Content contains the information and ideas that carry the substance and meaning of your communication. Delivery represents the shape and form that the content is given when presented. This includes the pace and rhythm of your communication, vocal quality, including tone, pitch and volume as well as the use of non-verbal cues.



When communicating to another, you must ask yourself, "Will the listener be willing to dance to the music of my communication in the way I want them to do so?"

Communication with awkward delivery and great content or with great delivery and little content will not be very successful.

When communicating, particularly face-to-face, we should all strive to be listener-driven. Balance is a key to life, and it is also a key to being an effective communicator.

To improve oral communications:

- When possible, take time to plan out what you will say
- Use words that refer to people and relationships to help create and sustain interest
- Incorporate shorter thought units to make your oral communications easier to follow
- Help embed your message in the mind of the listener by using repetition
- Make your communications more conversational and keep your audience in mind
- Eliminate industry jargon and use familiar words to increase the ability of the listener to identify with what you are saying

To improve tone and inflection:

- Remember that every nuance and inflection carries a potential meaning to the listener whether it is confidence or nervousness
- Relax, pace yourself and slow down
- Do not detract from your message by using credibility thieves such as "ah," "um" and "like"
- Take time to listen to your voice and believe in what you are saying

This last point is important because if your heart does not believe what is in your head, then your ability to communicate effectively will be severely impaired.

To be more effective in our ability to influence and collaborate with others, there must be a mental change. This entails:

- Relating to others as a psychological equal (i.e., mutual respect for the others' needs)
- Refraining from unilaterally exercising your positional power
- Becoming open to new options and creative alternatives
- Realizing your responsibility for conflict resolution through initiating discussions and assessing how you may be contributing in part to the conflict

When it comes to gaining and exercising the skills necessary to properly influence and collaborate with others, each of us has a decision to make. Do I continue in the manner to which I have become accustomed with its sporadic results, or do I endeavor to identify a new and possibly better way of doing things? If nothing changes, then you will not get better by doing the same thing.

Julius E. Rhodes, SPHR, MSIR, BSBA is the founder and principal of mpr group in Chicago, IL.

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"A good trainer is:

One-third *teacher,*

One-third *coach,*

And one-third *entertainer."*

Source:
Unknown Trainer

