



5 out of 5 Suns



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Strategic Training

The Seventh in the Second series of:
An Executive Summary for Busy Managers.

Do you remember the days when training was the equivalent of a white-collar worker vacation? Shrinking budgets, increased competition and workforce retention have made those relaxed training stints a thing of the past. This month we explore a volume that will help ensure that every training dollar spent can be tracked as an effective ROI for both the company and employee!

I love Fortune magazine... they are always ranking and stacking the best of the best of one thing or another. This month they decided to go on a witch hunt to dispel the myth that Jack Welch's management rules could never be debunked. Well guess who got into the mix... that's right, the lady in the green flippers. Jim Donald, CEO of Starbucks says that they are not focused on being No. 1 or 2 in their market. They are focused on being the "company of choice." Hmm... if you are the "company of choice", can you really be anything other than No.1? I love semantics... it is what keeps the big boys and girls on top and the rest of the world from ever getting there ☺

Every so often the Land of Academia comes up with a gem worthy of implementation in the real-world. This time around, two professors have authored a book that helps the everyday business person understand effective and efficient training activities. If the person in your company responsible for recommending and approving training does not already have this book on their shelf, get a new person!

Nick Blanchard and James Thacker authored a book titled, Effective Training: Systems, Strategies and

Practices. The book presents case studies, developed around real world examples, in order to introduce each new topic throughout the text. This makes it extremely easy to understand the angle from which the information is being presented as well as how the topic can be traced back into workplace challenges.

Training budgets are like dandelions. As soon as the wind blows too hard in the wrong direction they are gone. However, if left unattended to, they can take over the place. Before you know it, you have an infestation on your hands and something drastic will have to be done.

The reason that I enjoyed this book so much was that right from the very first word they got down to business. The first chapter takes us on a quick tour of what we should look for in an effective training program so that we do not waste the company's money or our employees' time. Many employees are working more than 40 hours a week right now. If they are removed from the office for a week to receive training, they darn sure better learn something worthwhile since they are going to have to really turn up the productivity to catch back up when they return.

It is stiff competition out there right now in the world of employee recruiting and retention. ***Ironically, employees who receive training that makes them more marketable are more likely to stay with an employer.*** This presents a dichotomy to management that must be understood, justified and resolved. The risk is that sending key employees to effective training will enhance their

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individual skills portfolio and resumé so they will be considered more desirable by the competition. However, not sending key employees to effective training will almost guarantee that they will be out scouting future opportunities.

The second chapter of the book jumps right into strategic implementation of training activities. Typically the human resources group is left out of most of the strategic planning process. Effective Training discusses how human resources can have a tremendous impact on the ability of an organization to successfully meet goals. There is a relatively simple three-part analysis for developing and selecting effective training activities that are in-line with the organizational strategy. These assessments include: Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes or KSA.

As a training needs analysis (TNA) is performed, the focus is on identifying the KSA required for successfully tackling a goal. Once the requirement is understood, the personnel available are rated on those particular KSAs. If a “gap” is identified, then it is this “gap” that is filled by the training process. Now, instead of the dart board theory or my personal favorite, the “in-town” theory (reduces the travel costs) of training and development, the company can make the investment knowing right from the start what the ROI will be. This strategic approach to training can save a tremendous amount of money as well as lending excellent credibility for employees that will have to make future sacrifices to recover from the time out of office.

The book goes into further detail on how to conduct a TNA. The interesting part of this is that it is fully expected that on occasion, it will not be a lack of KSAs that are holding the company back. The deficiency will be in the organizational process, such that all of the training in the world would not be able to correct the problem. This is the part that appeals to senior managers. Maybe it is not a lack of training on the part of your employees; maybe your process is broken and needs to be changed.

All in all, this is an excellent text to utilize as a reference while developing training plans and budgets for the future.

Summed up...

1. *The shotgun approach to employee training is no longer a viable, cost effective solution.*
2. *Strategic Planning, it's not just for bean-counters anymore. I would wager that you could reduce your training budget by 20% and retain the same effectivity by taking a more strategic approach.*

Just my opinion and we all know what “they” say about opinions...

Thanks
JB
jbreitfeller@breitideas.biz

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