

# HR & Training Digest

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## Are Your Employees Doing What *You* Think They're Doing? Or Are They Doing What *They* Want to Do?

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Every organization strives to hire the best possible employees and those employees have the greatest intentions of performing the job design to the best of their abilities. But, are we setting them up for failure? When was the last time you compared your job design to the job actually being performed?

It is human nature to procrastinate on tasks that we are not fond of performing. In the traditional model of on-the-job training, the actual job being performed changes over time as tasks are “lost” or performed differently based on individual bias. Additionally, it is the current employee that suffers when a “lost” or altered task is discovered by their manager, resulting in decreased job satisfaction or even disengagement, depending on the severity of the manager’s reaction.

The manager’s reaction is understandable; after all, we have a job design that outlines the responsibilities of the job. But did we, as managers, ensure the employee was appropriately taught to perform the job to match those expectations?

A comprehensive training program can refresh an organization’s job designs and boost productivity, as well as efficiency throughout the organization. When developing training content, the job design is the foundation to determine the necessary tasks and skills for success. As the different jobs within the company are reviewed, overlapping skillsets are identified to create core training content for all newly hired employees. Depending on the role the employees will ultimately fill, customized training supplements should be created to round out the necessary skill sets for functional job success.

Conducting training under the umbrella of a structured program will ensure that all employees receive the same information and the same set of initial expectations. It is important to prepare newly hired employees for the possibility of encountering conflicting task performance processes and procedures once they enter the job environment. By doing so, employees complete training

with confidence in the skills they have learned. This confidence reduces the influence of existing employee behaviors, at least initially.

As the newly trained employees join their peers in the work environment, there is a brief window of opportunity to identify inconsistencies between training and actual on the job performance of tasks. To maximize this opportunity, it is important to maintain regular communication routines during the first 90 days after training with employees. Once employees begin "bargaining" over how tasks should be performed, some trainees will adopt the ways of their peers. Seeking regular feedback from newly trained employees will enable training development for existing employees and reinforce expectations.

Trainers and management should be open to the possibility that there might be more efficient or as efficient ways to perform tasks than the current training prescribes. Identified inconsistencies should be thoroughly reviewed and considered for potential training revisions. It is easy to make the choice to change training and policy to adopt more efficient processes. What is the benefit of revising training and adopting processes that are only found to be "as efficient" as those being trained? There are two equally important answers. The first is employee engagement. By adopting employee-preferred methods for performing tasks that are equally as effective and efficient as trained methods, engagement will be increased by a feeling of empowerment. The residual impact of this will be a staff that seeks efficiency. Secondly, employees will adapt easier to changes that must be made to other task completion processes.

Over time, the negative effects of on-the-job training systems will be eliminated. All employees in similar job designs will be performing the job in a like manner, allowing for true measurement of productivity and efficiency between employees and in the job design as a whole.

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