

2004 SACUBO Best Practices

Physical Plant's Training Needs Assessment Process

James Hellums
The University of Memphis

Lynne Owens
The University of Memphis

Jeanette Smith
The University of Memphis

Tanya Groves
The University of Memphis

Teresa Hartnett
The University of Memphis

Abstract

In an effort to promote and encourage the training and development of Physical Plant employees, individual training programs are developed and implemented for each employee. An individual plan is the best method of insuring that each employee is capable of executing their work in the most efficient and effective manner possible and that the professional and personal goals of each employee are identified and acted upon.

In the initial phase of this process the training office and supervisor assess for each employee the training and development that is required by law, regulation, University or department policy and other training that is needed to improve performance on the present job.

The employee reviews the assessment completed by the supervisor and identifies additional training and development needs in those areas and adds training for their growth and development. Training identified by the employee should promote their ability to execute their work and meet their professional and personal goals

The result of the assessments by the training office, the supervisor, and the employee forms the basis of a training and development plan for the employee for the coming year.

Introduction of the Organization

The University of Memphis is a comprehensive urban university committed to excellence in undergraduate, graduate, and professional education; the discovery and dissemination of knowledge; service to the metropolitan community, state, and nation; and the preparation of a diverse student population for successful careers and meaningful participation in a global society. The University offers 15 bachelor's degrees in more than 50 majors and 70 concentrations, master's degrees in 46 subjects and doctoral degrees in 21 disciplines, in addition to the Juris Doctor (law) and a specialist degree in education. The U of M campus is located on 1,160 acres with 201 buildings at more than four sites. The university enrolls more than 20,000 students each semester, and employs more than 2,500 faculty and staff.

The Department of Physical Plant provides custodial service; maintains the

campus landscape; and offers full service for air conditioning, heating, plumbing, electricity, electronics, carpentry, and painting. The department is also responsible for University construction contracts, major construction, construction inspection and room modifications. The department's goal is to maintain and operate University facilities in the most efficient, effective, economical, and safe manner possible.

Statement of the Problem/Initiative

In the continually evolving workplace environment of today, change is significantly impacting the duties and responsibilities of all employees. The Department of Physical Plant recognized the need to establish a systematic process whereby the training and development needs of its employees are assessed and subsequently addressed. Such a process would ensure that all employees are capable of executing their work in the most efficient and effective manner possible and that the professional and personal goals and needs of employees can be identified and acted upon. This represents a change from the status quo, when much training was offered and many employees participated – however, the missing link was the connection between the needs of the organization and the knowledge and skills of the employee was lacking.

Design

The process was built upon an already strong commitment to training on the part of Physical Plant. Indeed, for several years the leadership of Physical Plant has established a goal that 3% of total working hours be devoted to training for each employee each year, or 57 hours. This goal was met and exceeded for each year it was established. The Training Needs Assessment Process takes this commitment to employee development one step further.

A key administrative requirement for this process is the facility to record and report training hours by individual employee along with a commitment to central record keeping. To this end, an Access (MAPPER) database was created and is maintained by the Physical Plant's Training Office. Data entry needs approximate 10 hours per month.

Implementation

Step 1. The process begins with the **(re)assessment of training needs by position**. Based on a list of common tasks typically performed by each position, the Physical Planning training office prepares or revises a generic training plan for each position. Training needs are identified for each job in the following two categories: 1) training required by law, regulation, University or department policy and 2) training necessary to improve performance on the present job (see Attachment 1 for example).

Step 2. Next, the training office works with supervisors to identify specific **training needs for each individual** they supervise utilizing the results of Step 1 and the prior year training record of that individual employees.

Step 3. **Each supervisor and individual employee meet** one-on-one to discuss the training needs assessment developed in Step 2. The employee has the opportunity at this meeting to include training in the 3rd category – learning for the growth of the employee that is not necessarily related to the employee's current job. Training identified by the employee should promote their ability to execute their work and/or help them meet professional and personal goals. This meeting typically takes place at the start of the performance appraisal cycle, when performance expectations are defined for the coming year.

Step 4. The resulting individualized Training Needs Assessment (see Attachment 2 for example) forms the basis for a training and development plan for each employee for the coming year. A review of the training and development of employees is conducted annually in conjunction with the performance appraisal process.

Benefits

The training and development of employees is an integral part of maintaining a work force capable of meeting and frequently exceeding the expectations of faculty, staff, and students. By identifying training needs in a systematic, individualized manner, the Training Needs Assessment process allows the organization to target employee development that is required to perform the duties and responsibilities of positions at maximum levels while at the same time achieving the strategic goals and objectives of the organization. In addition, the process ensures compliance by identifying and tracking training and development that is required by law, regulation, University or department policies. Finally, the process provides for the growth of the individual in areas not necessarily related to the employee's current job

Retrospect

If the department had had the luxury of unlimited time to devote to this project, implementation by area (Custodial, Landscape, and Crafts and Trades) would have been much more effective. Gradual implementation would have been easier to accomplish and weaknesses could have been corrected along the way.