

TRAINING SYSTEMS

On-the-job training is the most common method of breaking in a new employee. But it may not be enough.

by Rudd McGary and Ed Wandtke

Almost every organization or company needs some kind of system that will bring new employees up to productive levels efficiently. (The following steps are intended only for new employees, not as a format for management development.)

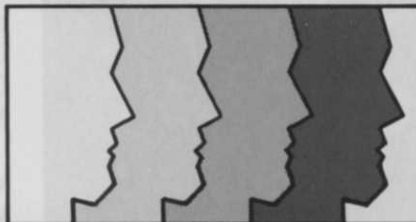
Much of the training we have seen throughout the green industries has been OJT (on-job-training). This type of apprenticeship training can be valuable if you have trained personnel who can give time to new employees, but it often results in lengthy, incomplete training.

In order to do a complete job of training your new people, you must go through several steps in order to make intelligent decisions about training.

1. Determine what skills or proficiencies are needed by the employee. By listing these specific needs, you're starting a list of the types of training needed. Some companies aren't able to write down job descriptions in a way that makes training possible. This step is the beginning point for all training, but it's an often-overlooked step because it seems obvious to management.

2. Determine the order in which the various skills should be taught. Every job has a set of basics. If these

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are taught first, the rest of the training process is much simpler.

3. Determine the skill of people you are going to train. Many companies using OJT as a training system waste valuable time because the employees are thrown into a work function without knowing if they have enough background to understand what they see others do. Simply having someone watch another do work doesn't mean that people understand what they are seeing. You can use written or verbal questions to check on the information and skill level of people coming into the organization. When you know this, you can be effective at training those deficiencies that the people have and not make assumptions on backgrounds of your employees.

4. Determine the training resources in your organization. Some of your current people work extremely well as trainers, others do not. As the manager, you have to make an assessment of those people who do their job well and in addition are able to communicate how they do their job.

A caution here: some people do their job well, but do it "their way." These might be extremely effective people from the standpoint of production, but they also might not be the people that you want to train new employees.

5. Determine methods of training. There are many ways to train people. Written materials, video tapes, OJT, programmed instruction, personal instruction, seminars and formal learning settings are among them.

6. Determine training costs for using the various methods. Two vari-

ables should be considered: how much will it cost, and how long will it take? The cheapest method may look good at first, but it may cost you money from a time standpoint. When you are paying an employee and they are ineffective in their work, it is costing you money. Look at the two variables side-by-side and you should be able to find a method that fits into your budget and a timetable for training employees.

7. Finally, determine how you are going to measure the results of the training. If you have a specific goal for the training, you should be able to measure its effectiveness. To check,

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issue written tests, ask questions, or observe tasks assigned the employee.

You must make sure that employees are aware of the intended outcome of the training. By doing so, you set clear, measurable training objectives. This will help them understand why the training is being done, and will give them reachable goals.

Without this final step you are simply training without either of the parties having a realistic way of measuring the effectiveness.

The training process can either be extremely formal or very loose in structure. In many green industries the latter is true.

If you are spending time and money to have your employees trained, you will have to spend time to prepare for that training, or its effectiveness will be unmeasurable and probably expensive. Once the training methods are in place, you should review them regularly to see if you are getting the results you expect. As you see the results of your training, the effort should be well worthwhile. **WT&T**



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