

Effective Training, Systems, Strategies, and Practices (Book Review)

Sobia Sultana

Lecturer, Department of Public Administration,
Lahore College for Women University, Lahore

Article Received: 2020-30-03

Article Accepted: 2020-04-02

The book “*Effective Training, Systems, Strategies, and Practices*” (P.Nick Blanchard, James W. Thacker and V. Anand Ram) establish a comprehensive analysis of training, systems, strategies and practices with specific reference to small business. The authors have attempted to integrate the strategic planning process with training, present a wide-ranging coverage of underlying theories, focus on training designs, development, implementation and evaluation. Furthermore, the models have been shown to broaden the knowledge of readers in effective training.

First chapter is written with an overview of training, its aims and goals as an open system. Training is a process by which employees develop their knowledge and skills to perform more effectively. Training also functions as an open system in which the inputs (organizational and employee needs, training budgets, personnel, equipment) are transformed into products (better knowledge, skills, attitudes). To meet the needs of the organization, an effective training system is necessary, which is basically a set of processes designed to transform the organization's resources into products through different phases. The sequential steps of the phases include triggering event (AOP <EOP), analysis phase (performance gap), design phase (formation of training objectives), development phase (creation of instructional strategies), implementation phase (pilot test / execution) and evaluation phase (analysis of training effects).

The challenge of aligning training with business strategies and retaining knowledge workers has become a top priority for organizations. In the 20th century, organizations are looking for ways to cope with problems related to demographic changes, increased market competition, meet consumer demand, and provide training programs for existing employees to keep up with changes.

Some basic concepts and terms are also considered important in the field of training i.e. learning, competencies, knowledge, skills, attitudes, training vs. development and education, therefore it is important to have a good understanding of how these terms are commonly used in this field.

In chapter second the authors align training with strategy. Strategic planning focused on determining how to carry out the organization's mission. Three main types of strategies are: proactive strategy, reactive strategy and organizational strategy. An organization should choose how it can develop its competitive strategy, either through the market leader or the cost leader. The external environment of the organization will reflect how much uncertainty and complexity exist. A strong and consistent relationship must be maintained between the organization's external and internal environment. Strategies cannot work in isolation, other factors such as technology and organization structure show great impact. The technology and its application must choose between routine and non-routine technology depending on the predictability of the results. On the other hand, the structure of the organization must be supportive of the internal functioning of the organization, policies, jobs, rules, etc. It is essential to realize the role of the Human Resources Development Unit as it works to increase trainees' abilities to increase value in their job performance. When employee skills are increased through effective training, organizational development (OD) is responsible for using those skills to manage job performance. This is how OD and HRD are interconnected.

Training and OD are similar in that they both focus on increasing human potential. These two terms may not always work together, as they have different roles, clients, problem responses, and organizational perception. Despite their differences if a coach has OD skills, it is highly beneficial as he / she will be able to perform force field analysis to identify resistance forces on the path of change and determine ways how they can reduce these resistances. If OD professionals do not have training competencies, they cannot develop a collaborative relationship with trainers.

Chapter three describes the underlying theories and their relationships with motivation and performance. Effective training practices are developed from theories. Experimental learning is a widely used training method in which situations are created that allow people to learn from their own experience. To understand performance, a model is used that shows that performance

(P) is the interaction of motivation (M), KSA, and the environment (E). Needs theories describe the types of needs, their importance, and their relationship to one another. A need theory called ERG by Clayton Alderfer presents three basic needs, that is, existence, relationship, and growth that must be met to achieve motivation. Process theories of motivation indicate that how the needs of the people can be transformed into actions, which comprise of three additional types: “Classical conditioning”, “Reinforcement theory” and “Expectation theory”. If individuals have low self-efficacy they cannot perform successfully because self-efficacy is necessary for trainee success.

On the other hand, learning theories are also important for training development because learning provides permanent changes in behavior and is not observable in the natural environment. There are two theories of learning, that is, the behavioral and cognitive approach. The theory of social learning, by Albert Bandura and his colleagues, is a learning model that shows that the events and outcomes are processed into information, leading to learning and behavior change. There are many factors that affect how employees go through training and influence motivation to acquire and resist training. These factors contain supervisor and peer support, climate for transfer, cognitive ability, self-efficacy, and valence of results. However, for many reasons, several trainees feel anxious when they enter training and hesitate to learn new material, such as fear of the unknown, incompetence, fear of losing rewards.

In chapter four the authors have portrayed the Training Needs Analysis (TNA). It is an organized process that determine the performance to be less than expected or required. It has two kinds: Proactive and Reactive analysis. The process starts with the "Trigger" phase when Actual Organizational Performance (AOP) is less than Expected Organizational Performance (EOP) and this difference is known as Organizational Performance Gap (OPG). The next phase in TNA is "Input", which consists of “organizational analysis”, “operational analysis”, and “person analysis”. Organizational analysis refers to examining an organization's mission and strategies, its allocation of human resources along with the organization's environment. Operational analysis is comprised of job and task analyzes that determine the KSAs required of employees to provide effective performance. The person analysis is a conduct to determine if any of the employees has not required KSA. If the employee lacks a KSA, they will be sent to training. There are two ways to measure the individual performance gap that includes

performance evaluation and proficiency testing. Data is collected through supervisor ratings, performance data, observations, interviews / questionnaires, attitude surveys, created situations, assessment center advice, and individual goals. The last phase of the TNA model is 'Output' includes Training Needs and Non training Needs. Training Needs are those that result from employees' lack of KSAs. While Non training Needs are of two types, one that has no KSAs deficiency and other has a KSAs deficiency that can be eliminated by job aids, practice and changing the job itself.

In Chapter fifth the authors have discussed the training design. The training design starts with the training objectives. The training objective elaborate what objective should be accomplished at the completion of the training program. This chapter also attempts to show the relationship between the objective of the learning and the techniques used to provide training. Theory helps to grasp the idea of a clear link between learning objectives and methods for the sake of better transfer and learning. There are several design constraints to be considered, like the time spend in preparing and delivering the training, the priority of the training program, and the amount of money to be spend. Once these issues are resolved, it is required to decide the type of trainees, their present degree of KSA, their motives to learn and the level of homogeneity for the group. Effective training has three components (1) Desired behaviors or what behavior trainees should adopt and display (2) Condition or atmosphere trainees will have to perform the required behavior (3) Standards required to be successful. Learning and transfer are two important aspects of training design. The theory of social learning and the Gagne-Briggs theory, a micro theory, presents a context for establishing all incidents in the most effective way and can guarantee the "learning" aspect of the trainees. Elaboration theory, a macro theory, helps determine the sequence of events that may be Topical or Spiral in nature. The reward system along with other factors considered will improve the overall effect of the transfer on training design.

In chapter sixth, traditional training methods are described. Lecture is one of the oldest and highly used types of training. In straight lecture the trainer present information and the role of the learner is to understand the information. The lecture / discussion method provides learners with knowledge that is developed, strengthened, and extended through interactions between learners and between learners and the trainer. Demonstrations are a visual presentation of how to

perform something or how something operates. To be successful, demonstrations must be combined with the lectures and discussion method.

Training games and stimulations are devised to replicate and accelerate processes, actions, and situations that occur in the learner's work. Therefore, learners can experience these events in the controlled environment where they can build their skills and improve performance. The different types and details are: 1) Equipment simulators are the mechanistic procedures that involve trainees to apply the same processes, activities, and decision means with the equipment they perform on the job. 2) Business games represent the form and functions of the industry, company or unit of a company based on the rules, principles and relationships drawn from the theory. 3) In-Basket Technique offers trainees with a package of information like notes, messages and reports that are used in a particular position. This popular quasi-simulation prepares employees for transfer or promotion. 4) Case studies attempt to stimulate decision-making situations that trainees might encounter at workplace. 5) Role play is a stimulus in which every member has a part to perform. They are presented with a topic, an overview of the situation and their roles. The types are “structural role play, spontaneous role play, single role play, multiple role play, and role rotation”. 6) Behaviour modelling is a normal inclination of individuals to follow (observe) others for doing something new. Another commonly used method, particularly in small businesses, is on-the-job training. The Job Instruction Technique (JIT), one of the on the job training method is a “behavioural strategy” with an emphasis on skill development. Other methods are: Apprenticeship training, Coaching and Mentoring. Besides, Audio visual (AV) can be useful for the above methods. AV includes static media (newspapers, graphics and posters), projected text and images, dynamic AV methods (audio tapes, films, videos, etc.)

Chapter seven elaborate the Computer- Based Training Methods .They are offered to trainees through online learning systems such as DVD, CD, LAN, Intranet and Internet, as well as IPOD, etc. CBT techniques consolidate the components to be learned in training methods such as the Intelligence Tutoring System (ITS), Interactive Media (IM), Virtual Reality (VR) and Programmed Instruction (PI). The pattern and content are modified in digital media using different techniques. PI is a self-training method delivered electronically through multimedia, printing, and other purposes. A learning management system is often used to combine training

functions and tools for learning with training programs. The Intelligence Tutoring System (ITS) is based on artificial intelligence and the use of Programmed Instruction (PI) to transfer training needs. Interactive Media (IM) allows students to practice business methods through graphics, animations, photographs, etc. Virtual Reality (VR) is a realistic three-dimensional teaching method in which students experience events that can occur in a real environment, but sensory input devices are essential. CBT is usually a low-cost method of training, but development costs are higher than other programs, so a full cost analysis is essential. CBT stimulates the learning process of symbolic testing, symbolic coding, and cognitive organization.

In chapter eight the development and implementation of training has been discussed along its phases. A comprehensive plan must be prepared for the development of the training that covers all the details on what kind of training will be structured and what kind of resources will be needed, from equipment and materials to trainers and apprentices manuals. This chapter also provides details on the ease of training that must be carried out within or outside the company. For on the job training ,one way to choose a trainer for training is to use managers as coaches. Another way to conduct successful training is to use an outside consultant. The KSA required for a trainer are instructional methods, adult learning process, interpersonal skills, verbal skills, and commitment to organization, etc. Occasionally, outside seminars are offered to train those who are least expensive and those who best train few employees. The output of the development became the inputs for the implementation stage. Some ideas for implementing training are structure of training, and then in term of what the trainer should do. There are some implementation ideas for trainers as well for making the training to be effective. They must make sure that all is equipped on time the preparation should be made before the starting of training session ,confirm that all equipment is in operation . First impression is the impact of the trainer's credibility on the trainees, the trainers should be well presented , starting training on time is important, trainees should be involved in discussing the additional expectation for trainings. A good communication skill, listening and questioning, providing instructions, applying non-verbal communication and avoiding the dysfluencies is very important in training. Dry run refines the training to remove any major malfunctions. Pilot program is also very important before implementation. In the end, the focus on training transfer is an integral part of implementation, it refers that knowledge or skills must be produced in the workplace.

This chapter (ninth) elaborates that training is of no use if it is not evaluated. Evaluating training is beneficial, especially in today's world, as organizations demand accountability at all levels, focusing on continuous improvement, quality, and cost reduction. The data obtained from the evaluation is worth the cost spent, as it details how well the training has achieved its objectives. However, some trainers resist to evaluate training for many reasons because in their opinions, it does not have to accomplish anything, so it is time-wasting and expensive to evaluate training. Above all, trainers think evaluation can be a threat to their jobs as evaluation indicates success or failure and if training fails it will affect their careers.

If training fails, it is easy to diagnose where the training process went wrong by evaluating the entire training process. The results of the evaluation phase are of two types: (1) Process Evaluation (2) Outcome Evaluation. In the process evaluation, the processed data is important for the trainer to see what works and what does not. Outcome evaluation is what you assess at the end of the training (whether you have achieved your goals or not). Evaluating the knowledge (declarative, procedural, strategic), skills and attitudes, behavior of trainees both before and after the training program in order to assess learning and behavior is vital. At the end of the training, perform a cost-benefit analysis or cost-effectiveness evaluation to determine if the cost of the training was greater than the benefit, or if the results are worth more than the cost incurred in the training.

In chapter ten, the key areas in orientation training is highlighted. Orientation training is the program in which new employees are provided with basic knowledge and information about the organization. Possible positive outcomes of a successful orientation are to lessen anxiety, decrease role ambiguity, lower turnover, improve job performance, increase level of devotion and much more.

In an organization there is labor diversity. In many organizations diversity creates conflicts because of the favor given by managers to those who are similar to them. Another problem is sexual harassment. These problems affect the productivity and expenses of the company. To control these problems, diversity training must be provided to the employees. Hofstede identified five dimensions in which the culture of one country is different from another country. Knowing the difference is important to expats because many countries bear billions of

costs for not knowing the difference and how to deal with it. However, many organizations are using virtual expats or employees from the same culture to be cost saving and profitable.

In chapter eleven, the authors elaborate that employee as well as managers development is very important. Employee development is an important process for retaining and keeping the employee motivated. Various approaches are used for employee development, training need analysis, job rotation, and special assignment. All these approaches are used to help employees prepare for their future careers. Lower-level managers primarily supervise and coordinate the work of non-managers. The middle managers coordinate the activities of the managers who report to them. Senior managers coordinate the organization's activities through their middle managers. Effective managers possess technical, interpersonal, and conceptual skills. Leadership research adds the concept of personal traits and style. Different management styles are used in organizations. Management styles are different combination of five dimensions 1) planning 2) risk tasking 3) bureaucratization 4) coercion and 5) participation.

Efficient managers must be able to adjust themselves and their division to the desires of the organization. Many organizations employ a combination of internal and external sources to offer their managers with the right mix of development opportunities.

Large corporations create their own internal universities for executive education programs.

Types of management development programs includes knowledge/skills development courses including conceptual and technical. Executive-level management's training is also very important to formulate strategic direction of the organization. Strategies for the development of future executives includes coaching, mentoring, executive MBAs, job replacement, challenging job assignments and many more. Succession planning is also very important for smooth development.

A successful succession strategy will facilitate employees and offer them development prospects by offering many approaches as stated above.

This book focuses on the problems that has been faced by smaller organizations in training and development. The authors have tried to focus on applying various approaches, activities and procedures to smaller organizations. In addition, relevant case studies have been included at the end of each chapter for a better understanding and comprehension of the concepts. The book is well written and covers formal efforts being made in organizations to

improve performance by increasing employee's KSAs through training and development. This book could be a guide for academics and professionals who want to gain insight and practical exposure in the field of effective training.

Reference

Blanchard, P. N. (2006). Effective Training, Systems, Strategies, and Practices, 4/e. Pearson Education India