

## On-the-job training

When there is a gap between what an employee can do and what that employee should be able to do, training is needed. Most learning takes place on the job, and its success will depend largely on the effectiveness of the training method and the ability of the manager, or the person conducting the training, to instruct the worker in that new skill.

The following is a proven strategy that can assist in the training process:

### 1. Don't take the need for employee training lightly

If you do not offer your employees the training they need to perform their jobs safely, you can be held liable for negligence.

The ability of your employees to undertake their jobs to their full abilities will ultimately benefit the bottom line of your business.

### 2. Define the training need

Be alert as to the need for training within your organisation. For example:

- Be aware of any plans for expansion or changes in technology which might require new skills within the organisation.
- Identify any operating problems, the outcome of inadequate performance, which would be corrected by training.
- Use job analysis and performance appraisal to identify individual training needs.

### 3. Prepare yourself for the training session

Although you may be completely familiar with all aspects of a given job, it is essential to make adequate preparations before attempting to instruct others. For example, determine how much skill you want the trainees to acquire by what date; break the job down into its various components; isolate and write down the key points; have the right equipment and materials ready; and make sure the workplace is in order.

### 4. Prepare the trainees

Some employees do not necessarily want to learn; others may even have a fear of learning. Hence, it is essential to put the trainees at ease and to foster an interest in the task by explaining the purpose of the training, what is going to be done and how the trainees and the organisation will benefit from it.



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## 5. Find out what the trainees already know

Check on what the employees can already do – you can then build upon that knowledge. You don't want to waste time teaching employees something they already know, but you cannot always assume that they really know what they say they know.

## 6. Present the task step by step

Explain how, and wherever possible, demonstrate what has to be done and how. Instruct clearly, completely and patiently. Pace your instruction carefully – one step at a time, and move on to the next step when you are sure each employee has absorbed what has been taught. Emphasise the key points. Encourage questions if something is not understood.

## 7. Check for understanding

Having explained the task, let the trainees demonstrate the job to you, explaining each key point in turn. This is important. Unless they can tell you the key points as they proceed, you can never be sure they have grasped the message. If no errors are made – fine. If an error is made, interrupt immediately and patiently go over that point. Continue in this way until you are sure the employees have mastered the entire process.

## 8. Have the trainees practice the skill

Practice will help to consolidate newly acquired skills. Under supervision, get the employees to practice each stage until the required standards of speed and accuracy are achieved. A progressive approach should be used. That is, when any two successive stages can be done separately at the required standard, have the employees practice them jointly until the desired standard for both steps is reached. Then the third step can be added, then the fourth, etc until the entire task is mastered.

## 9. Put the trainees to work

When you feel sure that the employees have mastered the skills, put them to work on their own. Designate to whom they go for help if required. Check progress frequently, particularly in the early stages. Retrain wherever necessary and be friendly and encouraging in your manner. As the employees become more confident, the need for coaching should diminish and finally the necessity to follow up on this task should cease completely.

## Further information

The following fact sheets provide further information on these issues:

- Performance appraisal
- Staff training
- Training needs analysis