Building Competitive Companies Since 1946

MANAGEMENT TRAINING PLANS THAT WORK

Management training today is a multi-billion-dollar industry. In many companies, most management training activities are generic. Everybody on the management team gets time management training, or emotional intelligence training, or whatever the current fad may be. This is a "one size fits all" approach, which is used whether an individual manager needs it or not. While such an approach may get everyone on a management team speaking the same language, it is expensive and time-consuming—especially for managers who are already skilled in the competency being covered in the training.

No manager is perfect, and most managers have a "Swiss cheese" profile—one with holes in it. However, PSP's research has shown that managers differ widely in their training needs. For example, some need better critical thinking skills, while others need to learn how to handle disagreement and conflict. Moreover, different managers prefer different training methods. Some like going to seminars, while others prefer to read books. Some like CDs and DVDs, while others want hands-on workshops.

Training Needs Assessment Is Essential

A manager's training needs are not always obvious. For example, a manager's difficulty in managing conflict situations may stem from poor verbal skills, rather than from fear. A manager's errors in decision-making may not reflect poor critical thinking skills, but rather impulsivity in stressful situations. If a careful **Training Needs Assessment** is not conducted, training might erroneously be focused on the symptom rather than on the underlying problem.

A careful Training Needs Assessment is the foundation of an effective management training program, whether it be for an individual or for an entire company. Tied into a strategic leadership competency model, this assessment should include ratings from regular observers of the manager as well as career development testing. PSP's **360° Survey** and **Career Development Evaluation** are ideal tools for such an assessment.

Once the assessment is completed, a **Root Cause Analysis** can be undertaken to establish underlying problems and

training needs for each manger. The Root Cause Analysis leads directly to the design of an individualized training plan. At PSP, training plans are individualized in two ways: first, in the specific areas in which training is needed; second, in the training methods used. Follow-through in management training and learning is much greater when training methods are customized to an individual's preferred way(s) of learning.

Coach-Managed Training Process

The next step in effective training plans is to pair the manager with a coach. The coach is an individual, usually inside the company, who has no direct supervisory authority over the manager involved in training. Through regular meetings, at least monthly, the coach helps the manager to prioritize among training needs and to manage the learning process. Indirectly, the coach also serves as an accountability mechanism for the manager. It is the coach's job to help the manager glean lessons learned from training resource materials, and also to encourage application on the job of lessons learned. Usually, managers work on one competency at a time, spending approximately two hours per week in professional development training activities. Over a period of 12 to 18 months, most managers can complete work on one or two development opportunities, while still juggling the responsibilities of a full-time job and life outside of work.

Follow-Up Assesses Improvement

Finally, effective management training plans include a follow-up step. It is important to assess improvement in each of the underlying development areas in order to complete the training process. Again, tools such as a 360° Survey and career development testing can be helpful in demonstrating measurable improvement in specific areas. Direct behavioral observations also help to measure progress.

Training plans undertaken according to these steps are not only individualized and cost effective, but they lead to better job performance by focusing on the most important areas that have practical and strategic application in the workplace.