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Assessment White Paper
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Will Omitting the Assessment Phase Of Training Hurt Anyone?

Picture yourself in this scenario. You just found out the team building event your company is conducting involves skydiving. You are all excited because skydiving is something you have always wanted to do. However, in order to minimize the expense of putting the program together the decision was made to purchase the skydiving training program minus any instructor assessment. "So what," you say, "it will still be fun."

The day of the event you spend the morning reading manuals, viewing videos, watching the instructor demonstrate all of the proper ways to jump, pull the cord, land, etc. You have read, seen and heard all about how to skydive. Now it's your turn to show what you have learned.

Since the assessment portion of the training wasn't purchased there will be no written test of your new knowledge, there will be no practice jumps from the platform, there will be no instructor accompanying you on your first jump. "So what," you say, "it will still be fun."

It's jump time. Everything you have learned is going through your head. You are given the signal and out you go. In your mind you go through step one, step two, step three ... What was step three, you can't remember! No one did an assessment and tested you on step three. The instructor didn't ask you to demonstrate step three.

You just realized something, omitting the assessment phase of training can hurt you.

Training someone to skydive, wait on tables, take reservations, sell banquets, or cook, is a process and not just an event. In most cases if you take short cuts with your training no one will get hurt ... unless you consider the guest who receives poor service and doesn't return or the employee who either quits or gets fired because he or she doesn't understand everything he or she was "trained" to do.

It has been said that, "Just because an individual has been trained doesn't mean he or she remembers what they were taught." (Sounds a lot like the skydiver scenario.) Assessment provides the instructor the opportunity to measure what the trainee has learned. It also helps the trainee understand what they haven't learned.

What constitutes a complete training program? There are four basic elements:

1. Preparation
2. Delivery
3. Practice
4. Assessment

Let's take a minute to touch briefly on a few of the attributes of the first three elements.

1. Preparation – The instructor needs to know:
 - what information the trainee needs to learn and why he or she needs to learn it
 - the best way for the trainee to learn the information (not the easiest way to teach it)
 - what are the final objectives the trainee is expected to attain
2. Delivery – The method of delivery may vary:
 - videos may provide a basic understanding of how to complete a task such as making a bed
 - seminars or employee meetings may be appropriate for dissemination of information
 - the Internet and CD-ROMs can be used for demonstrations for “how to” situations such as using a software program,
3. Practice – The trainee’s opportunity to show what he or she has learned:
 - hands-on trainee demonstration under supervision (task driven)
 - role playing of a staged scenario (guest relation situation)
 - web based simulation (software application)

Let’s now take a look at the objective and the role of assessment in the training process.

4. Assessment –

The objective of assessment is to complete the training process ensuring that the trainee has been given the appropriate instructions he or she will need to perform his or her job to the established standards. Think of the assessment element as the measurable review.

The role of assessment is to challenge the trainee and give him or her the opportunity to convey his or her understanding of what has been learned. The feedback resulting from the assessment gives the trainee a chance to see where his or her understanding of the material needs to be improved as well as what he or she has done correctly. It offers an opportunity for the instructor to provide constructive feedback on the trainee’s knowledge and performance.

An employee should be trained based on the specifications of his or her job description. The job description is therefore also the basis for performance evaluations. The performance evaluations should take into consideration the initial training provided the employee.

Assessment can be provided prior to training as well. The pre-training assessment might be used for an employee with experience. In this case it can be used to determine if the employee presently understands the training material and, therefore, those specific training areas may then be eliminated.

We have touched on the objective and the role of assessment in training. Now let’s take a look at some examples of situations where assessment could (and should) be used.

#1 - New Employee Orientation:

Generally a new employee orientation meeting is an uncomfortable situation for the new employee. Handbooks are reviewed, policies and procedures are talked about and, because the new employees are not comfortable enough with the new environment, few, if any, questions are asked. This orientation meeting is not a good time to administer an assessment test. How do you know if a new employee understands everything he or she

should know? Offer the assessment as an “open book, take home” review. This will allow the employee to spend an appropriate amount of time reviewing the handbook for answers. The employee will learn and understand the information much better than if there was no assessment at all. Feedback must be provided on the results of the assessment.

#2 - Sales Training:

Whether the sales situation occurs in the catering/sales office, reservation office, or corporate call center, there are opportunities to provide assessment and feedback. A simple and effective form of assessment is the quality assurance or “mystery” shopping call. Scenarios can be created so the trainee can be assessed on his or her ability to sell correctly based on predetermined parameters. Technology today allows for almost instantaneous feedback from this type of assessment because shopping call evaluation forms, and if incorporated, recordings of the calls, can be e-mailed or made available over the web within minutes of being completed.

#3 - Food and Beverage Outlet Training:

Here the assessment can take the form of a “test serving” where the trainee is given the opportunity to demonstrate the entire process from greeting to serving to collecting payment. The “guest” should be a qualified employee that is capable of providing objective feedback, in the form of a checklist or evaluation form, on the trainee’s performance. The cost of a meal or a couple of drinks is a small price to pay to insure the trainee is performing his or her duties based on established standards.

#4 - Task Training:

Many of the duties performed in a hotel are task based. In these situations the most appropriate form of assessment might be a performance checklist completed by a qualified supervisor. For example, a housekeeping trainee would be observed while he or she performs the duties outlined by their job description (cleaning a guestroom or public areas). In situations where the job requirements may be somewhat lengthy and involve several tasks (cleaning a guestroom) the assessment should be broken up and based on specific tasks (changing the bedding, cleaning the bathroom, cleaning the guestroom, etc.). Adults have better comprehension when learning in smaller “chunks” of time.

Learning that includes an assessment (a quiz, an online form, or a demonstration of the trainee’s ability to perform a task) allows the trainee to be interactive in the training process. Interactive learning is more effective than non-interactive learning. Watching videos, listening to presentations, and watching someone else perform a task, do not allow the trainee to become involved in the learning.

Providing proper training is not easy. It requires commitment from both the instructor and the trainee. The trainer becomes accountable to the trainee and likewise, the trainee becomes accountable to the trainer. When training is treated as it should be, an investment of time, effort and money in an employee, the ROI (Return on Individual) results in a better employee, less turnover, happier customers, and better profits.

One more thing, when an employee is aware that some sort of assessment will be part of his or her training he or she will usually pay more attention to the material. Now we’ll try to support this theory. If you would like to take a short five-question assessment quiz of your understanding of

the material contained in this white paper simply select the following link. No going back to review anything now! Good luck.

I want to take the assessment quiz.

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