

Designing for Development: Manager on-line magazine article published 16th July 2012



IAM Chief Operating Officer, James Turner, asks how organisations can use an appraisal to identify an employee's future training and development needs.

It is much easier to use an appraisal to inform further training if this has been considered at the point of design. With this in mind, the structure of appraisal documentation should address the following:

- ◆ Identification of the employee's key performance indicators (KPIs) and measurement of recent past and current performance against these objective criteria;
- ◆ Identification of the relevant personal behavioural competencies expected of the post holder in the role, and current, objective measurement against these;
- ◆ Opportunity to discuss appropriate short and medium-term career aspirations, with comments from a line manager about how these are relevant to the organisation's mission statement and strategy;
- ◆ Between three and five SMART [Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound] objectives linked to any of the three areas above – addressing shortfalls in the case of one and two, and focusing on goals to achieve the agreed areas in three.

If these relevant areas have been covered it will be much easier to draw the relevant training and development needs together.

Identifying needs

Start by identifying which shortfalls in current performance actually need addressing. In essence, this should focus on ensuring the employee has the relevant skills to perform in all areas of their job description, as objectively identified by their KPIs. Remember, however, that for the majority of job roles we will be talking about 'on-the-job coaching', carried out by either a line manager or another competent employee. No great cost should be involved, or time spent away from the job required – just well-structured guidance and coaching, delivered in the most appropriate manner, and in accordance with the employee's preferred learning style.

It will be necessary to identify precisely what training and development will be required to prepare the employee for future opportunities linked to career progression, or (perhaps more likely) to organisational changes.

Addressing the behavioural competencies may be more challenging, however, and might involve a mixture of setting positive examples; one-on-one coaching; and even, perhaps, some focused off-job training sessions. The challenge for most employers will be dealing with shortfalls the employee is unable to correct him or herself due to capability (as opposed to competency) issues.

Finally, it will be necessary to identify precisely what training and development will be required to prepare the employee for future opportunities linked to career progression, or (perhaps more likely) to organisational changes. Solutions here will include job shadowing, secondment, and even private study, as well as any of the other methods previously mentioned.

For the record

The output from identifying the training needs in each of the three areas should be summarised on the appraisal documentation as a record of the areas to focus on over the coming 12 months. Keeping this record means mini reviews of performance throughout the year will also focus on ensuring the identified training and development needs are being addressed.

One for all

If you have followed these guidelines – and if your organisation has a number of employees – it should now be possible for you to collate all training and development needs for all employees into a matrix that will allow you to cost, and therefore plan, schedule and communicate the training activity for the coming 12 months.

While there will always be more useful training than available budget, this structured approach to developing the training and development plan will allow you to closely align the mission statement and strategy of the organisation to the skills required of your workforce.

Communicate plans

Now you need to communicate the training and development plan to all employees, and ensure you follow through not only to delivery, but also with an assessment of the benefits to the individual, the team and the wider organisation. This will ensure your organisation reaps the full benefits of developing the workforce – and means there should be budget available for further training next year when you start the appraisal process again!

In addition, be aware that if the employee's performance does not improve in any of the identified areas of underperformance, but you have failed to deliver the training and development that was identified as necessary to achieve your objectives, you will find it very difficult to take any disciplinary action that would be considered reasonable by an employment tribunal.