

Creating effective on-the-job-training

On-the-job-training (OJT) is hands on instruction completed at work to learn the core competencies necessary to succeed in an occupation. There are many ways to create effective OJT.

The Minnesota Dual-Training Pipeline team knows that employers need the flexibility to do what works best for their company. This handout is intended to offer ideas and suggestions on creating OJT programs; however, it is not a requirement to utilize every item below for participation in Pipeline.

The basics of on-the-job-training

In general, best practices of effective on-the-job-training programs include four key elements:

Goals of on-the-job-training

The OJT program clearly answers the question: “**What** does our OJT plan actually teach our employees?” Answering this question is typically done by first working with education partners to better understand what they intend to cover through related instruction in order to ensure the OJT complements and enhances competencies learned through related instruction.

Types of on-the-job-training

The OJT program outlines **how** the training will be conducted. Job shadowing, mentorship, cohort-based training, assignment based project evaluation and discussion-based training are just some of the most common ways to lead training for employees.

Tracking on-the-job-training

The OJT program has a system for **tracking the progress** of the training for the employee(s). For the trainee, s/he needs to know how long the program should last and what competencies s/he will be expected to master. For the employer, it is critical to ensure that each employee in the program is making progress towards completion of their OJT. PIPELINE has tools for tracking programs available at dli.mn.gov/pipeline.

On-the-job-training roles are clear

Employees leading the training portions for OJT programs and those actually participating in the training program need to **know what their roles in the training are and that they are being supported** throughout the process. Whether it is a single manager or the whole management team at the company, all participants (trainers and trainees) should have a point of contact available if they have questions or need help with their progress with the OJT.

Five common types of effective on-the-job training

1. Job shadowing

Job shadowing involves observing a professional in his/her work environment in order to learn by seeing how a job is performed. Job shadowing is generally done over a short period of time and usually will not last longer than a week.

For effective OJT programs, job shadowing is often used to introduce an employee to a new job for which s/he will eventually be responsible at the company. It can also progress into a side by side approach in which a trainer first shows a trainee how to do something and then the trainee does the task.

Job shadowing is also an effective way to teach a new employee about the company as a whole by having the employee shadow multiple jobs cross the company. This gives the employee good perspective on the value his/her work plays in the context of the entire company's mission. It also helps to create a culture whereby each individual employee has a key role to play in the company's overall success.

2. Mentorship

There are numerous effective elements to create a solid mentorship program for OJT. In general, the following four elements are keys to creating a successful mentorship program:

- Both the mentor and person(s) being mentored must have a desire to participate in the program. If the company is relying on someone to be a mentor who is not interested in being a mentor, it will likely fail.
- The mentor should have some training and support to be a good mentor. It is one thing to know the content; it is another thing to effectively mentor someone new and to teach it.
- The work environment must be supportive of the mentor/mentee relationship and toward creating a well-balanced mentorship program. Mentors need to be able to support mentees by allowing them to actually do the work while also not leaving them off on their own to fend for themselves. Good mentors should also be open to learning new things from the fresh perspective of a mentee.
- Finally, highly effective mentorship programs allow space and time for mentors and mentees to get to know one another so that trust and a strong relationship can take hold. This will benefit the long-term success of the entire mentorship program.

3. Cohort-based training

Cohort-based training can be effective when it makes the most sense to bring the entire cohort of employees/trainees together to learn something all at once. It is also a great way to build relationships among a group of trainees who are all working together to learn competencies and excel in the occupation.

For example, whether it is the lead trainer at the company offering a lesson about a particular skill to the whole cohort or an opportunity for a company executive to do company-wide trainings for all cohort participants; cohort-based training can effectively provide information to many trainees at once. Cohort-based training can be as formal as a regularly scheduled meeting with the trainer or as informal as a 'lunch and learn' but all contain the opportunity for all the trainees to learn and enhance their competencies.

4. Assignment-based project evaluation

Assignment-based project evaluation is the creation of a specific project which will then be reviewed by a trainer or supervisor. Once completing the review, the trainer will meet with the trainee to discuss the project's strengths, weaknesses, and any questions the trainee may have about the project.

This method of training is effective at assessing a trainee's mastery of a subject and can also be an effective confidence building tool as trainees begin to see success in their project completion. Eventually, as OJT concludes, assignment-based project evaluation is very likely going to be a typical way of assigning work for the employee as they continue to progress beyond their formal OJT program.

5. Discussion-based training

Discussion-based training techniques incorporate group conversation, which is one of the best ways for more knowledgeable employees to pass their skills on to employees/ trainees. Discussion provides open communication among the trainees and the trainer(s). This type of training may also use demonstrations to prompt discussions, which are a powerful training tool as they can involve the use of tools and equipment to showcase the steps being taught or the main processes being adopted.

Additionally, it is important to keep the employees involved and engaged so that they retain new information. For better results, experts recommend using some softer training methods that are not necessarily needed to convey information but are effective in making receiving instructions an enjoyable experience. They include the use of humor and encourage participation and positive re-enforcement. This also helps to build confidence in trainees.

Questions?

Contact us at PIPELINE.Program@state.mn.us or 651-284-5353. Visit us online at dli.mn.gov/pipeline.