

8: Types of Training

Learning Objectives

1. Be able to explain and give examples of the types of training that can be offered within an organization.

There are a number of different types of training we can use to engage an employee. These types are usually used in all steps in a training process (orientation, in-house, mentorship, and external training). The training utilized depends on the amount of resources available for training, the type of company, and the priority the company places on training. Companies such as The Cheesecake Factory, a family restaurant, make training a high priority. The company spends an average of \$2,000 per hourly employee. This includes everyone from the dishwasher and managers to the servers. For The Cheesecake Factory, this expenditure has paid off. They measure the effectiveness of its training by looking at turnover, which is 15 percent below the industry average (Ruiz, 2006). Servers make up 40 percent of the workforce and spend two weeks training to obtain certification. Thirty days later, they receive follow-up classes, and when the menu changes, they receive additional training (Ruiz, 2006). Let's take a look at some of the training we can offer our employees.

As you will see from the types of training below, no one type would be enough for the jobs we do. Most HR managers use a variety of these types of training to develop a holistic employee.

Technical or Technology Training

Depending on the type of job, technical training will be required. **Technical training** is a type of training meant to teach the new employee the technological aspects of the job. In a retail environment, technical training might include teaching someone how to use the computer system to ring up customers. In a sales position, it might include showing someone how to use the customer relationship management (CRM) system to find new prospects. In a consulting business, technical training might be used so the consultant knows how to use the system to input the number of hours that should be charged to a client. In a restaurant, the server needs to be trained on how to use the system to process orders. Let's assume your company has decided to switch to the newest version of Microsoft Office. This might require some technical training of the entire company to ensure everyone uses the technology effectively. Technical training is often performed in-house, but it can also be administered externally.

Quality Training

In a production-focused business, quality training is extremely important. **Quality training** refers to familiarizing employees with the means of preventing, detecting, and eliminating nonquality items, usually in an organization that produces a product. In a world where quality can set your business apart from competitors, this type of training provides employees with the knowledge to recognize products that are not up to quality standards and teaches them what to do in this scenario. Numerous organizations, such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), measure quality based on a number of metrics. This organization provides the stamp of quality approval for companies producing tangible products. ISO has developed quality standards for almost every field imaginable, not only considering product quality but also certifying companies in environmental management quality. **ISO9000** is the set of standards for quality management, while **ISO14000** is the set of standards for environmental management. ISO has developed 18,000 standards over the last 60 years¹. With the increase in globalization, these international quality standards are more important than ever for business development. Some companies, like 3M (QAI, 2011), choose to offer ISO training as external online training, employing companies such as QAI to deliver the training both online and in classrooms to employees.

Training employees on quality standards, including ISO standards, can give them a competitive advantage. It can result in cost savings in production as well as provide an edge in marketing of the quality-controlled products. Some quality training can happen in-house, but organizations such as ISO also perform external training.

Skills Training

Skills training, the third type of training, includes proficiencies needed to actually perform the job. For example, an administrative assistant might be trained in how to answer the phone, while a salesperson at Best Buy might be trained in assessment of customer needs and on how to offer the customer information to make a buying decision. Think of skills training as the things you actually need to know to perform your job. A cashier needs to know not only the technology to ring someone up but what to do if something is priced wrong. Most of the time, skills training is given in-house and can include the use of a mentor. An example of a

type of skills training is from AT&T and Apple (Whitney, 2011), who in summer 2011 asked their managers to accelerate retail employee training on the iPhone 5, which was released to market in the fall.

Continuing Education Matters



A small business owner explains the advantages of offering informal skills training about new products.

Soft Skills Training

Our fourth type of training is called soft skills training. **Soft skills** refer to personality traits, social graces, communication, and personal habits that are used to characterize relationships with other people. Soft skills might include how to answer the phone or how to be friendly and welcoming to customers. It could include sexual harassment training and ethics training. In some jobs, necessary soft skills might include how to motivate others, maintain small talk, and establish rapport.

In a retail or restaurant environment, soft skills are used in every interaction with customers and are a key component of the customer experience. In fact, according to a *Computerworld* magazine survey, executives say there is an increasing need for people who have not only the skills and technical skills to do a job but also the necessary soft skills, such as strong listening and communication abilities (Hoffman, 2007). Many problems in organizations are due to a lack of soft skills, or interpersonal skills, not by problems with the business itself. As a result, HR and managers should work together to strengthen these employee skills. Soft skills training can be administered either in-house or externally.

Professional Training and Legal Training

In some jobs, professional training must be done on an ongoing basis. **Professional training** is a type of training required to be up to date in one's own professional field. For example, tax laws change often, and as a result, an accountant for H&R Block must receive yearly professional training on new tax codes (Silkey, 2010). Lawyers need professional training as laws change. A personal fitness trainer will undergo yearly certifications to stay up to date in new fitness and nutrition information.

Some organizations have paid a high cost for not properly training their employees on the laws relating to their industry. In 2011, Massachusetts General Hospital paid over \$1 million in fines related to privacy policies that were not followed (Donnelly, 2011). As a result, the organization has agreed to develop training for workers on medical privacy. The fines could have been prevented if the organization had provided the proper training to begin with. Other types of legal training might include sexual harassment law training and discrimination law training.



Figure 8.1: Professional training is normally given externally and is usually required for specific professions in which updates occur often, as in the accounting industry. [Wikimedia Commons](#) – public domain.

Team Training

Do you know the exercise in which a person is asked to close his or her eyes and fall back, and then supposedly the team members will catch that person? As a team-building exercise (and a scary one at that), this is an example of team training. The goal of team training is to develop cohesiveness among team members, allowing them to get to know each other and facilitate relationship building. We can define **team training** as a process that empowers teams to improve decision making, problem solving, and team-development skills to achieve business results. Often this type of training can occur after an organization has been restructured and new people are working together or perhaps after a merger or acquisition. Some reasons for team training include the following:

- Improving communication
- Making the workplace more enjoyable
- Motivating a team
- Getting to know each other
- Getting everyone “onto the same page,” including goal setting
- Teaching the team self-regulation strategies
- Helping participants to learn more about themselves (strengths and weaknesses)
- Identifying and utilizing the strengths of team members
- Improving team productivity
- Practicing effective collaboration with team members

Team training can be administered either in-house or externally. Ironically, through the use of technology, team training no longer requires people to even be in the same room.

Human Resource Recall

What kind of team training have you participated in? What was it like? Do you think it accomplished what it was supposed to accomplish?

Managerial Training

After someone has spent time with an organization, they might be identified as a candidate for promotion. When this occurs, **managerial training** would occur. Topics might include those from our soft skills section, such as how to motivate and delegate, while others may be technical in nature. For example, if management uses a particular computer system for scheduling, the

manager candidate might be technically trained. Some managerial training might be performed in-house while other training, such as leadership skills, might be performed externally.

For example, Mastek, a global IT solutions and services provider, provides a program called “One Skill a Month,” which enables managers to learn skills such as delegation, coaching, and giving feedback. The average number of total training days at Mastek is 7.8 per employee² and includes managerial topics and soft skills topics such as e-mail etiquette. The goal of its training programs is to increase productivity, one of the organization’s core values.

Safety Training

Safety training is a type of training that occurs to ensure employees are protected from injuries caused by work-related accidents. Safety training is especially important for organizations that use chemicals or other types of hazardous materials in their production. Safety training can also include evacuation plans, fire drills, and workplace violence procedures. Safety training can also include the following:

- Eye safety
- First aid
- Food service safety
- Hearing protection
- Asbestos
- Construction safety
- Hazmat safety

The **Occupational Safety and Health Administration**, or OSHA, is the main federal agency charged with enforcement of safety and health regulation in the United States. OSHA provides external training to companies on OSHA standards. Sometimes in-house training will also cover safety training.

Starbucks Training Video

This is a short video Starbucks uses to train new employees on customer service.



Key Takeaways

- There are several types of training we can provide for employees. In all situations, a variety of training types will be used, depending on the type of job.
- *Technical training* addresses software or other programs that employees use while working for the organization.
- *Quality training* is a type of training that familiarizes all employees with the means to produce a good-quality product. The ISO sets the standard on quality for most production and environmental situations. ISO training can be done in-house or externally.

- *Skills training* focuses on the skills that the employee actually needs to know to perform their job. A mentor can help with this kind of training.
- Soft skills are those that do not relate directly to our job but are important. *Soft skills* training may train someone on how to better communicate and negotiate or provide good customer service.
- *Professional training* is normally given externally and might be obtaining certification or specific information needed about a profession to perform a job. For example, tax accountants need to be up to date on tax laws; this type of training is often external.
- *Team training* is a process that empowers teams to improve decision making, problem solving, and team-development skills. Team training can help improve communication and result in more productive businesses.
- To get someone ready to take on a management role, *managerial training* might be given.
- *Safety training* is important to make sure an organization is meeting OSHA standards. Safety training can also include disaster planning.

Exercises

1. Which type of training do you think is most important for an administrative assistant? What about for a restaurant server? Explain your answer.
2. Research OSHA. What are some of the new standards and laws it has recently developed? Outline a training plan for the new standards.

¹“The ISO Story,” International Organization for Standards, accessed July 26, 2010, www.iso.org/iso/about/the_iso_story/iso_story_early_years.htm.

²Mastek website, accessed July 30, 2011, <http://www.mastek.com/careers/learning-development.html>.

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