Lesson n 06: Training & Development

Over time, it often becomes necessary for employees to learn new knowledge or skills, to enhance their job performance and keep pace with changes in their occupation. I-O psychology intersects with cognitive psychology and learning theories in the domain of **training and development**, which focuses on increasing employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities. Like many other organizational processes, training is, in part, based on job/task/work analysis to determine the elements of a job that a person requires training to do. The training process often begins with a training needs analysis, which is an analysis of the organization, tasks, and person that results in objectives for training (Arthur, Bennett, Edens, & Bell, 2003). Principles of learning and cognition serve as the basis for designing training and development interventions.

Basic principles about memory, perception, judgment, and learning include cognitive biases, primacy and recency, interferences, decision-making, and developments. These are relevant to determining how best to convey information about how and when to engage in various work behaviors, and how to assess how well training has accomplished its goals.

What topics do organizations commonly use training for? Some training is motivated by legal considerations, such as diversity and sexual harassment training. With diversity training, employees are typically educated on the benefits of diversity, and provided with suggestions for acting with sensitivity in a diverse workplace. Sexual harassment and discrimination, which are typically prohibited both by law and organizational policies, can also be addressed via training.

Employees may be educated on key terms and ideas related to harassment, practice identifying situations in which harassment may occur, and discuss appropriate courses of action for reporting and preventing harassment.

Other types of training are prompted when employers require employees to possess a particular area of knowledge, skill, or ability to meet organizational needs. If an organization wants to avoid training, they may look to hire employees that already have those KSAs that they desire (a selection approach).

Alternatively, they may use help current employees develop those KSAs (a training approach). The decision between these approaches is driven by several considerations, including cost, timing, other available resources, and staffing goals. For example, for employers do not wish to increase the size of their workforce, training may be a more attractive option.

In addition, the expected *trainability* of a knowledge, skill, or ability and skill level of current personnel might be taken into account. Consider the likelihood of successfully teaching someone a specific skill, such as typing, using a cash register, or engaging in successful customer service interactions, compared to the more difficult challenge of improving a person's mathematical abilities or extraversion.

In organizations today, training can occur in a wide variety of formats. Training often occurs with a **face-to-face instructor**, but many organizations today are relying on **remote** or distance training, mediated by communication technology, and self-paced training.

In addition, employers are generally motivated to understand whether their resources devoted to training are achieving key training objectives. Consequently, many employee trainings are followed, either immediately or after a delay, with some form of evaluation. Some **evaluations** focus on how much of the training content was understood and retained by the trainee, while others focus on how well that information *transfers* to on-the-job behaviors, how well the trainee feels about the training process, and what the outcomes for the organization are (Kirkpatrick, 1959). For the individual, training can be considered in terms of impact on career development and advancement in the organization.