

THE INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: The trends of globalization, growing competition, innovation, and technological development have led to numerous changes in the labor market. The training and development of employees contribute to the improvement of their skills through the application of numerous innovative methods. A career no longer develops within a single organization. Investing in human resources and developing their knowledge and potential become priority tasks for managers in a challenging environment. Organizations that create a culture of learning, and acquiring new knowledge, skills, and abilities among their employees have a greater chance of attracting a quality workforce. The paper emphasizes the importance of training and development as well as the need for introducing innovative approaches in human resource management, and the application of innovative methods such as coaching and mentoring.

Key words: training, human resource development, innovative approach, coaching, mentoring

1. INTRODUCTION

In the theory and practice of human resources management, the importance of employee training and development activities, as well as their impact on organizational performance, is increasing. Knowledge, skills, and abilities represent a strategic resource and the basis for gaining a competitive advantage in a changing business environment. The application of traditional methods does not contribute to the improvement of employee performance, and organizations are expected to adopt and apply more innovative methods of training and development. The aim of this paper is to outline the characteristics of employee training and development and present innovative methods regarding these important aspects of human resources management.

2. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF EMPLOYEES

In the theory and practice of human resource management, terms such as training, development, and education are often used in different ways by different authors. The following is a presentation of the views of prominent authors on the concept of employee training and development.

2.1. Characteristics of training and development

Training is often described as the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for performing a current job more effectively. Development is often defined as the acquiring of knowledge, abilities, and skills that are necessary for future jobs. Knowledge, skills, and abilities cannot be developed without prior forms of training or formal education. These two terms are used to depict different aspects of learning within organizations – training refers to a set of activities, and development refers to the result of such activities. Training provides opportunities for learning, and development occurs as a result of such learning [1], [8]. Employee training is a planned effort by an organization to enhance employee performance within their workplace and in a related workplace. This form of learning includes changes in specific knowledge, abilities, attitudes, skills, or behaviours of employees. The term training is often mistaken for employee development – development involves creating opportunities for learning aimed at helping employees develop personally. The goal of development is to equip employees for future job or career growth over the long term [2], [8].

Lazear highlights that training programs are designed to develop both general and specific skills of employees. General skills can be applied in any company and contribute to improving the performance of the company under consideration. However, employees also benefit from training,

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especially if they move to other companies. Unlike general skills, specific skills cannot be used in other companies to improve organizational performance. In this case, employees represent a significant source of competitive advantage for the company that finances the training. In this way, the organization builds employee loyalty and commitment, thereby reducing employee turnover. However, a high level of specific skills can reduce their employability in situations where they are forced to leave the company. Training in most cases results in the acquisition of hybrid skills that are a combination of general and specific skills [3], [8].

Armstrong [4, p. 608] claims that investment in training and development can contribute to any of many potential benefits:

- improving individual, corporate, and team, performance concerning speed, quality, results, and overall productivity;
- attracting employees of high quality by offering them opportunities for training and development that would raise their competence and skills levels, their work satisfaction levels, and increase their rewards and advancement opportunities;
- providing benefits that are non-financial (career growth as well as development) within the overall reward strategy;
- improving operations' flexibility through broadening the range of employees' skills;
- increasing employee commitment by supporting their identification with the organizational goals and mission;
- helping the change management by emphasizing the need for change and equipping people with the appropriate skills and knowledge necessary for adapting to new circumstances;
- providing line managers with the skills needed for the effective management and support of the development of the employees;
- helping the development of a constructive organizational culture, e.g. focused on improving performance;
- providing better quality services to customers;
- reducing the costs of learning (shortening the learning curve) [8].

As a consequence of globalization as well as the intensity of competition, changes in the business environment have created a changed reality with new rules – traditional methods have become inadequate for 21st century organizations. The new training paradigm has given possibilities for companies to keep a high degree of flexibility and adapt more easily to changed circumstances in their surrounding. Simultaneously, employees have started participating in designing different parts of the process of learning. Table 1 represents the differences between supportive and innovative training [5, p.175].

Supportive training is characterized by clear and defined training sessions, a structured approach based on methods that have already been used in the past, as well as resistance to change and the absence of rewards for participating in training activities. Innovative training is open, multidisciplinary, and takes place in a work atmosphere that supports the willingness to discuss and exchange ideas while rewarding employees.

Table 1 – Differences between supportive training and innovative training

Characteristic	Supportive training	Innovative training
Objective	Training objectives are defined and clear	Training objectives are agreed upon but they change and evolve
Approach	Training is focused, fixed, and structured	Training is multi-disciplinary integrative and open
Methods and tools	Training is based on methods and tools accepted in the organization and they have already been checked in the past	Training assimilates tools and methods according to their suitability for dealing with changing new needs and situations
Attitude toward changes	Unexpected events in the organizational environment are realized as “disruptive” to the training process	The future is not perceived as an “enemy” and is integrated in a friendly manner into the training process
Employee involvement	Training aims and contents are usually dictated from above and are determined by a small number of people	Employees (as individuals and as groups) are involved in designing the aims and in formulating the training program
Learning climate	Job environment is characterized by a high level of formalization and sometimes also suspicion	Supportive job environment and atmosphere of openness, willingness to share knowledge and discuss any issue
Evaluation of training	Difficulty in relating the training process to changes in the employees’ positions or behaviour	Active involvement of employees in the training process creates a change in their behaviour and attitudes
Reward and incentives	Usually without direct reward for taking part in training activities	Rewards and incentives for taking part in training activities and for improving performance as a result
Results	Training enables to maintain the existing system and preserve the	Training enables constant examination of the organization’s values and

	management's established managerial-business way of thought	modus operandi, compared to its competitors
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Source: Industrial and commercial training, 39 (3), p. 175 [5]

3. INNOVATIVE METHODS OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

With the development of information technologies, the application of various innovative methods of developing employee competencies and careers, such as e-learning, coaching, and mentoring, has been enabled. Organizations must increase investments in training and development processes in order to retain quality employees and reduce employee turnover. Human resource managers, in cooperation with other sectors of the organization, have the responsible task to make adequate decisions when considering training as well as development processes.

Employee training and development is a complex activity of human resource management. In order for employee development to lead to the improvement of individual competencies and the business success of the organization, it is necessary to adequately define the specifics of a particular training program, the phases of the training process, the methods of individual and organizational career management, as well as innovative development methods (coaching, mentoring).

International companies aim to create training and development programs that could improve their abilities and skills. Kleiman states that quality training programs are based on management orientation, operational employees' skills, and orientation [9]. Diedrich, McCracken, and Heaton claim that coaching has become an important tool for career development not only for employees but also for organizations. Agarwal, Angst, and Magni state that although coaching practice can improve individual and organizational performance, there is very little empirical evidence about its effects in the literature [10].

Coaching involves a personal approach to work that supports employees in developing their competence and skill levels. The need for coaching may stem from formal and informal performance evaluations, but coaching opportunities also arise during everyday activities [4]. Although coaching as a method usually focuses on skills, it can also be used to develop knowledge (although some other methods are better at transferring knowledge). Human resource development professionals do not usually play the role of trainers but rather focus on training supervisors regarding coaching and developing their interpersonal skills to improve their effectiveness [1]. Managers today face a workforce that is more inclined to be well-trained than to be controlled. While employees may lack technological competence, they are becoming better educated as a group. Participating in problem-solving and decision-making with the help of superiors in providing services and improving quality is acceptable to them. The diversity of the workforce is another characteristic that highlights the need for good coaching skills. Coaching skills include paying attention to personal differences incorporated into team success [6], [8].

Mentoring is seen as a type of coaching where a relation is formed between a junior and senior employee. The mentoring goal is to offer the junior employee guidance and insight into how the company operates its work. Coaching emphasizes the technical segments of the work, whereas mentoring is more focused on the employees' growth and progress within the company. In addition, while coaching accentuates the development of skills, mentoring highlights developing attitudes. Mentoring is organized mainly for employees at managerial levels, although sometimes it also applies to lower management levels. Historically, mentoring mainly belonged to informal activities, but it has now become a formal process in many companies [1]. Vorbeck [7] states that when moving from one stage of career development to another, employees make their own decisions in most situations, e.g.

what the opportunities are, analyze their own abilities and successes, but also seek help when it comes to education, chances for advancement, etc. However, there is another part of the needs that relate to psychological problems and interpersonal relationships (stress, conflicts, difficulties in communication, adaptation, etc.). In such situations, mentoring processes are slower and more complicated. They are carried out by managers or the case is delegated to the human resources department [7], [8].

4. CONCLUSION

Implementation of training and development programs creates many challenges for companies and individuals. Adequately designed programs and tools can raise organizational performance. Companies should stimulate the developing organizational culture that improves the knowledge, abilities, and skills of their employees. Innovative approaches to the development of human resources contribute to the development of employees' competencies, but they have also become an important tool for career development. Organizations that take care of their employees, their professional development, and their motivation have a greater chance of achieving a competitive advantage in a dynamic and changing global environment.

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