

Why Don't People Perform The Way We Expect Them To?

Via your needs analysis (the subject of last month's featured article) you should be able to discover why people do not perform as expected. There are a myriad of reasons why people may receive training or may, in theory, be skilled, and still not perform the job we expect them to perform. Some of these reasons include:

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| Management | Think of Dilbert's pointy haired boss, he is the perfect example of management discouraging people from performing to the best of their abilities. Sadly, a single manager can be responsible for a discouraged or demotivated workforce. You can apply all the training that you want, but the real solution will be removing that manager. |
| Motivation | Things like downsizing and mergers can cause people to feel anxious and nervous about their job security. Their focus is no longer on doing a quality job, their focus is on <i>keeping</i> their job. |
| Environment | It's entirely possible that the environment of the organization prohibits people from doing their jobs well. The lack of proper equipment, poor office configuration (having a teams split on different sides of the building or different floors), or inflexible work schedules can all contribute to a lack of productivity and the belief that people do not know how to do their jobs. |
| Interpersonal | It's sad, but true, that we spend more time with the people at work that we do with our own families. This means that interpersonal issues can arise and can impact the quality of work being conducted. In addition to work-groups, or individuals within a work group, who do not get along, an individual may have personal issues such as a divorce or childcare issues that keep them from focusing on their job. |
| Health | Similar to interpersonal issues, health issues can be distracting or simply monopolize and individual's time; again making them ineffective at work. |
| Systems | Systems are very similar to the environment issue in that, if a company's computer systems or workflow processes are poorly designed, it will lead to poor output. One organization, which got exceptionally low customer service scores, had a computer system that was so impossible to navigate even the customer service representatives could not find information! Originally, management wanted to train the representatives in customer service skills until it was pointed out to them that the reps <i>wanted</i> to give great customer service, but the <i>truly</i> could not because they were hampered by the system with which they had to work. |
| Knowledge | It's absolutely true that some people may lack the appropriate knowledge to do their jobs well. This is something that training <i>can</i> solve. |

Skills

Just like knowledge, some people may lack the skills to do their job well. A quality control auditor who has never learned the metric system may have a hard time performing his or her job. Luckily, this is a skill that can be taught and a problem that can be addressed by training.

Of all the reasons why people do not adequately perform the jobs we expect them to (and there are probably many more reasons than appear on this list), there are only two that training can impact: lack of knowledge and lack of skill. Be diligent about conducting a needs analysis (see last month's featured article) so that you are sure you are applying training to a training *problem*.