

On-the-Job Training

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Guidelines for effective on-the-job Training

On-the-job training (OJT) is one of the best training methods because it is planned, organized, and conducted at the employee's worksite. OJT one method used for broadening employee skills and increasing productivity. It is particularly appropriate for developing proficiency skills unique to an employee's job - especially jobs that are relatively easy to learn and require locally-available equipment and facilities.

Morale, productivity, and professionalism will normally be high in organizations that employ a sound OJT program.

Hanan will use this form of training to strengthen performance and improve compliance with protocols and guidelines for MCHN services at the facilities Hanan is working with.

OJT is an activity that is sometimes performed as part of a supervisory visit, where the supervisor observes a certain behavior and provides OJT on the spot, or, it can take place during a visit specified for providing OJT. In either case, OJT must be provided in a structured manner to be effective. An analysis of the major job requirements (identified in the position description and performance plan) and related knowledge, skills, and abilities form the basis for setting up an OJT plan.

OJT Cycle

Structured OJT is a systematic, purposeful approach. With structured OJT, you have a trained trainer who understands how to deliver one-on-one training and who uses written materials while training. There is an orderly method to the training delivery, a cycle:

First: Conduct and orientation. Before the training begins, conduct a brief orientation to discuss the purpose of the training, share any relevant materials, and set a specific performance objective to be achieved. At the end of the orientation, both trainer and trainee agree on the training activity.

Second: Trainer demonstrates the task while the trainee observes. It is important for the trainee to understand the purpose of the task and how it relates to the entire job. When the task demonstration is completed, the trainer summarizes the task and encourages the trainee to ask questions. The trainer also should connect the task performed to previous and future tasks.

Third: Trainee performs the task as the trainer coaches. While the trainee performs the task, the trainer provides assistance as necessary, once the trainee has finished performing the task; he or she should summarize the task to verify understanding of each step.

During this step, the trainer must create and maintain an atmosphere of equality with the trainee – not in the sense of skill, knowledge and experience, but in terms of respect and dignity. At no time should the trainer be in a superior role.

Fourth: Observe and provide feedback. After the trainer provides a demonstration and coaching, the trainee probably is ready to perform the task without assistance – but the trainer should verify this with the trainee just to make sure. The trainee should perform that task step by step. The trainer should refrain from giving any feedback, until the task is completed, unless the trainee’s performance is likely to involve harmful consequences.

Before giving feedback, the trainee assesses his or her own performance. Feedback should be gentle, specific and descriptive rather than evaluative.

Fifth: Trainer and trainee debrief. During this step the trainer provides a summary of the task. The trainer ensures the trainee understands how the task related to previous and future tasks and checks the trainee’s understanding of the sequence of steps. At the end of the debrief, the trainer and trainee discuss next steps, possibly including more training sessions, and/or setting up practice time. Any questions the trainee has are covered.

Additional guidelines and tips for OJT:

The trainee should be active not passive. For most of the session, the trainee should be the one carrying out the task, typing on the computer, asking questions, etc. You should not be talking, writing, or typing the whole time while the trainee sits and watches.

Give context for the task. Ask how well the information fits into the job description, as a whole, related tasks, result expected, etc. Information in isolation does not stick very well.

Set up a reasonable schedule with goals. If possible, schedule regular meetings and objectives for what the trainee will learn.

Ask the trainee to read relevant material before the session. The material could be part of a protocol, a manual, a project report, etc. After reading, the person can bring comments and questions. The OJT session can proceed at a higher level. You could also assign short “homework” before the session (for example: “ in preparation for our OJT session next week, please read the ANC job aid and checklist, please bring at least 5 questions on things you do not understand or find confusing.

Use job aids. Job aids are a step by step guide to how and when to complete a task. The trainee can refer to the job aid when performing the task alone.

Use examples. Show applications of the theory.

Use diagrams. Visual aids can help demonstrate a complex process. A good technique is to ask the trainee to sketch a diagram first so that you can see what he/she understands

Use variety. Try to have at least two different activities. Variety will keep the trainee engaged.

Use “bookends”. Start with a few minutes asking what was covered in the last session. This is the time to review and confirm before building further. The other “bookend” is a recap at the end. For example: “What came across clearly this time, and what do you think we should go into again next time?”

Use probing questions. “Do you get it now?” is NOT really a probing question. Open ended questions are better: “Have you come up against this in your work so far or in an earlier job? What happened in that case?” “Can you give me an example of this?” “What is the hardest part in your opinion?”

Reporting OJT at Hanan

OJT is a structured activity that follows a cycle based on adult learning concepts. It is different from feedback and ad-hoc coaching. What defines an OJT activity is its structure, objective, and process, not its duration. A specific place will be assigned on the reporting forms designed by Hanan to capture this type of training.

Sources:

JSI and World Education On-the-Job Training Guide, October, 2004

Human Performance Applications, Training and Certifying On-the-Job Trainers, March, 1998.