Learning program design. What do you need to consider?

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What do you need to consider when designing and planning for a development program?

Let's be honest. Time is money. Not developing employees is even more costly in the longer term.

Development of employees – increases productivity, engagement and retention, which are all critical factors in a successful business. But do you have the time to create a program, or training sessions 'from scratch?".

Design and development costs

The first category of cost to be considered is the design and development of the training programme, whether this comprises classroom events, self-study materials, simple coaching sessions or some combination. You will need to consider:

- Internal days of design and development (1 hour training design typically takes = 8 hours of development for an experienced learning designer.
- Cost of external designers or developers
- Other design and development costs (purchase of copy right, branding of program, learning licenses, travel expenses, etc
- Outright purchase of 'off the shelf' training materials or courseware (www.facilitatedtraining.com)

Promotional costs

Most organisations devote effort to promoting their training programmes.
This second category takes promotional costs into account:

- Internal days of promotional activity
- Costs of external agencies
- Other direct costs of promotion (posters, brochures, etc.)

Administration costs

An allowance must be made for the time taken by the training department in administrating the training programme. This will typically be a factor of the number of learner:

- Hours of administration required per learner
- Direct administration costs per learner

Business or Department costs

The next category of costs relates to the delivery of the training, whether this is mediated by the business (tutors, instructors, coaches, etc.) or is self-administered (workbooks, CBT, online training, etc.). Let's start with the information needed to calculate costs:

- The number of learners who will be going through the programme
- Hours of group training (whether classroom-based or delivered in real time, online)
- Hours of one-to-one training (typically face-to-face, but could conceivably be conducted by telephone, video conferencing link or in real-time, online)
- Hours of self-study training
- Additional administration hours (preparation time, the time needed to review or mark submitted work or the time needed to correspond by email or multi Media with online learner or employee)
- Business expenses (travel, accommodation, subsistence, etc.).

Materials

Then there's the cost of materials:

- Cost per learner of training materials (books, manuals, consumables, etc.)
- License cost per learner for use off-the-shelf materials

Facilities

You will also need to allow for the cost of your training facilities, whether these are internal or external. Make sure to include the rental or notional internal cost of the following:

- Training rooms and or Room hire
- Flipcharts.
- Data projector access
- Catering
- Open learning / self-study rooms /break out room for activities
- Other equipment used

Learner costs

Probably the most significant delivery cost relates to the learner themselves. It is only necessary to charge a learner's cost against the programme if training is undertaken in time that would otherwise be productive and paid for, so you only need to estimate the amount of travel and training that is undertaken in productive work time, i.e. not in down time, breaks or outside work hours. This of course will depend on your organisations policy.

When an employee goes through a training programme in work time, the organisation is not only having to pay that person's payroll costs, they are also losing the opportunity for that person to add value to the organisation. When a salesperson is on a course, they are not bringing in new business. Similarly, a production line worker is not creating products, a researcher is not developing new ideas and an accountant is not finding ways to save money.

If an employee can be easily replaced while they are undergoing training, then there is no lost opportunity – the cost is simply the employee's payroll costs. In many

cases, however, it is simply not practical to obtain a suitable replacement, so the output that the employee would have generated in the time that they are receiving training will be lost. In this case, the true cost of the employee being trained is the lost opportunity – the 'opportunity cost'. The calculation of opportunity costs goes beyond the scope of this article, but, suffice to say, they are greater than an employee's payroll costs and need to be considered in any serious evaluation of costs.

Finally, don't forget to include any direct leaner expenses - travel, accommodation and per diem or out of pocket expenses.

Evaluation costs

You also need to make an allowance for the time spent evaluating the training, whether this is an ROI analysis or some other method. There are various ways to determine Return of investment of learning. Some simple methods include:

- Ensure that their manager is familiar with the learning outcomes and how it can be applied back to the learners role.
- Schedule time with each learner in 30, 60 and 90 days time to discuss how they have applied new skills
- Have the learner share an update about what they have learnt with their fellow team members.

For more detailed information as to how you can get these best out of your investment of training and development of your people, contact Facilitated Training. Email hello@facilitatedtraining.com or visit our website www.facilitatedtraining.com