



TenStep Supplemental Paper

13 January 2004

Cross Training

Cross training refers to training employees in multiple functions across the organization, the benefits of which are many. It is not human nature to remain static; we seek change in our lives, and our work lives are no exception. Employees get worn-out doing similar things over and over again. Cross training is a good way to provide employees with the change they seek in their routine work.

Employee cross training helps managers to circumvent stagnation, improve motivation and rejuvenate departments. Most managers consider monetary rewards the best form of motivation. However, cash rewards and perks are taken for granted more often than not. Employee motivation can only be built and sustained in a professional and unified atmosphere.

Employees sometimes feel that their work is more significant than the work of others. This mindset can be eliminated through cross training. Once employees get to work in unfamiliar departments, they will learn to better appreciate and respect their colleagues. So, besides familiarizing employees with the work of other departments, cross training also improves employee attitudes.

Cross training can sometimes be used as a disciplinary strategy for employees who are lapsing into non-performance. Employees often return from this temporary transfer rejuvenated, and this is reflected in their work.

However, there is always the danger of managers misguidedly dealing with cross-trained employees. Giving an employee more responsibility to make up for the absence of another employee amounts to exploitation. Also, sending employees to another department with little notice and no explanation does nothing to motivate them. An effective cross-training program has to be a planned process that involves employees in decision making, and they should be given ample time to accept the idea and offer feedback.

Summary

Cross training, when conducted effectively, can benefit both the organization and its employees. Employees learn new skills, and management can motivate them without using perks or other financial means of motivation.