



## TenStep Supplemental Paper

---

6 July 2005

### **No Training Department? No Sweat!**

*Training resources come to the rescue of those without training departments.*

A small start-up company hired an assistant at \$8 an hour to perform basic administrative duties, which included creating a customer mailing list using a word processing program. The assistant worked on the mailing list for three hours. But when the senior executive tried to access the list, it was irretrievable. Instead of wasting three more hours in redoing the list, the company hired a consultant at \$50 an hour to retrieve the list. The consultant couldn't salvage it either. The list had to be remade- another three hours of work! Once again the list was irretrievable.

The reason for this repeated failure is simple- the assistant didn't know how to create a retrievable file using a word processing program. The company couldn't waste hundreds of dollars in creating a single file, but it also could not afford a training department to train employees in basic functions.

Statistics reveal that a basic training department costs approximately \$60,000. From the start-up company's perspective, a loss of \$100 in assistant and consultant fees doesn't balance out against \$60,000, and so many employers prefer the cheaper, unskilled employee. But what if the company has many unskilled employees and they make similar mistakes everyday?

#### **An employer in a fix!**

Most employers view training as an overhead expense. Poorly trained employees cost organizations money everyday, compounding the problem. Unfortunately, starting a training department means hiring training managers and personnel, allotting training rooms and maintaining training records. The prohibiting costs and efforts of starting a training department leave employers with little choice. Or so they think!

#### **More to offer**

An organization can train employees in the absence of a training department.

#### ***Public seminar companies***

Most organizations receive flyers from 'public seminar companies' announcing the start of training courses. Public seminar companies specialize in a variety of training topics and courses designed for different proficiency levels, from how to use a software package to designing training programs and managing projects. Because they teach in many locations, it is likely that a seminar is offered in the vicinity of the organization.

Seminar companies provide the instructors and training material. Since their courses are open to general public, employees get the opportunity to mix with employees from other organizations. The fee structures of some seminar companies are based on participation. Therefore, when the level of participation is high, organizations can take advantage of group discounts.



## **TenStep Supplemental Paper**

---

### ***Basic education!***

Many educational institutes provide courses for working professionals. These courses are designed for skills or knowledge enhancement. Many other colleges too are realizing that there are untapped skills in individuals that require polishing and that can be done without earning a degree. Educational institutes provide local organizations with helpful and current courses. These institutes also often send their professors for guest lectures. Some organizations enroll their employees for distant education courses and degrees.

### ***The power of seeing***

Videotapes of the best people at their job are a powerful training resource. A sales employee who once read about how to close sales learned better when he 'saw' an expert close a sale.

Organizations can videotape experts performing and modeling accepted behaviors and effective techniques. Not only is this the fastest way to teach a skill, but learner retention is rated high in this medium. Videos can provide Just-In-Time training for immediate review. They can be purchased from established training vendors or created in-house. Training videos do not require expensive equipment or professional actors. A simple videotape of a top performer can explain a job process in a sequential manner.

### ***Webster!***

Online learning is gaining popularity with the advent of e-learning. Organized online sites offer a variety of self-paced courses. A learner can sign on and sign off at his leisure. He doesn't need to leave his desk, let alone leave his building! A learner with better grasping power can move on faster without waiting for his colleagues to catch up.

### ***On-the-house, on-the-job!***

Only a handful of skilled employees generally know what the others need to know. Such employees should be identified and assigned the task of mentoring or providing on-the-job training to the other employees. If the skill is more generic in nature, then a small seminar by the in-house expert can do the trick.

One organization asked its in-house expert to divide a training topic into 5 to 10 sentence-long e-mail messages. These messages were displayed on the intranet over the course of a month. While the learning was slow, the employees found it easy, as the learning chunks were manageable. The e-mails could also be saved for future reference.

### ***Outside help***

A smart shoe retailer asked all the athletic footwear vendors he associated with to hand over any literature and videos they had. From this data, he prepared an informative course on the basics of athletic footwear construction for his salespeople. Some restaurants ask their wine salesmen to conduct short courses on how to uncork and serve wine. Vendors are great sources of information. In fact, most have their training programs in place. These can be borrowed or acquired at a nominal fee.

### ***More outsiders***



## **TenStep Supplemental Paper**

---

Many organizations prefer training consultants because they can be hired on an ad hoc basis. This saves the organization from training administrative tasks. Second, the organization can hire expertise in a field whenever the need arises. Organizations usually resort to assigning training functions to their best managers.

In addition, training consultants construct training based on the uniqueness of the organization's employees, resources and business objectives. With help from consultants, organizations can avoid reinventing the wheel. These consultants come with the support of an extensive network of learning, development and organizational change professionals. Also, they are trained to match organizational resources with training needs.

A well-known training and development saying reads, "What's worse than training your employees and losing them? Not training them and keeping them!" Thankfully, there are a variety of training resources that can bail out organizations in the absence of training departments.