



## TenStep Supplemental Paper

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### **The One-Armed Swordsman**

*A one-man army can successfully manage a training department.*

#### **Key Learnings**

- Contrary to popular belief, small training programs and training departments can be as effective as their big brothers.
- Elementary proficiency in a broad range of competencies is a must for a one-man training shop.

Can training be a one-man show? Can small training departments provide learning that would impact their organization's success? Start-up organizations and those with small training budgets have small training departments where a couple of individuals take charge of all aspects of training.

#### **Jack the Trainer**

As a specialized trainer, an individual is expected to master a few unique competencies such as needs assessment, content delivery or product designing. However, to meet the responsibilities of a small training department, a trainer needs to be the proverbial Jack-of-all-trades.

A broad spectrum of competencies alone can compensate for limited resources and tight budgets. These competencies help learning professionals manage and control small training budgets and departments successfully.

#### **The Coveted List**

According to learning experts, the following competencies are critical for the success of a one-man training show:

- Training and performance knowledge
- Contemporary business knowledge
- Management skills
- Cognitive skills
- Technical skills
- The art of building relationships
- Resourcefulness

#### **Competency: Training and Performance Knowledge**

The list of even the most basic of training functions is rather exhaustive! A one-man army is expected to perform tasks that include needs assessment, designing, delivery and testing. To perform these tasks effectively, learning professionals must have a basic understanding about:



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- Defining learning objectives
- Adult learning theory
- Facilitation skills
- Presentation skills
- Designing training
- Performance consulting

Apart from supporting the performance of basic training functions, this understanding helps learning professionals review off-the-shelf and internally developed training programs or plans.

### **Competency: Business Know-How**

To be able to correlate training to business results, a learning professional needs to understand the basics of business dynamics. Because training plays a key role in achieving business results, knowledge about business practices of the industry, the organizations' goals, key success factors and performance measures become mandatory.

Staying current with the latest in the business world is easier than it sounds. Reading business magazines and industry publications and attending conventions or seminars are simple ways of maintaining currency. Basic business knowledge coupled with an understanding of how the budgeting system works helps learning professionals present their training plans and budgets in an intelligible, comprehensible language.

### **Competency: Management and Organization Skills**

Without careful organization and management skills, even the best designed training plans go awry. Learning professionals must remain focused to reach training milestones in time. Professionals can choose from simple checklists to complex planning software to remain on track.

In addition to managing training logistics, learning professionals must know when to follow up to avoid expensive mistakes and waste. For instance, a trainer is asked to manage budget expenses. Without a follow-up on invoices, it may not be possible to make timely payments to vendors. Even a few outstanding vendor bills lead to over-budgeting training expenses for the upcoming year.

### **Competency: Cognitive Skills**

Strong intellectual or cognitive skills are critical to managing small training departments. As a leading trainer says, "Having solid cognitive skills goes a long-way in enhancing your effectiveness in a small training department". These skills include:

- Adopting a systems approach to problem solving
- Observing
- Identifying and defining problems



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- Prioritizing
- Analyzing data

The ability to brainstorm and ask thoughtful questions is as important as possessing cognitive skills. Learning professionals need these skills to identify the real causes of problems, assess learning needs and develop realistic solutions.

### **Competency: The Ability to Build Relationships**

An organization's success feeds on the relationships it nurtures. The success of a professional managing a small training department lies in building and maintaining ties with learners and other stakeholders. This could be done by:

- Acknowledging both verbal and non-verbal expressions
- Identifying expectations
- Creating a positive image

Professionals with strong communication skills such as influencing others, coaching and giving feedback find maintaining and building new ties easy. While trainers and investors require regular coaching, constructive and timely feedback is an integral part of any training initiative. Equally critical is the ability to convince:

- Investors and top management to support training strategies and ventures.
- Learners about the benefits of proactive participation.

Unlike other business problems, issues that stem from a lack of training are not obvious to others. While demonstrating the need for and benefits of training, learning professionals must communicate their message in everyday business language.

### **Competency: Technical Skills**

Organizations may not expect learning professionals to develop learning applications or software. However, even a small training department has a few technical 'must-knows'. They include using a:

- Word program
- The web or the Internet
- Excel sheets (or any other spreadsheet program)
- PowerPoint for presentations
- Running a training budget on a computer

In view of the invasion of e-learning, learning professionals must be familiar with:

- Popular off-the-shelf online courses
- The requirements and constraints of their computer systems in supporting e-learning programs



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- The benefits of available e-learning options
- Basic functions and capabilities of their IT systems. This would help them translate training needs into "systems language", getting the organization's systems team to support training initiatives better
- How to research and search using the Internet
- How to use inexpensive delivery systems like the Intranet, e-mails and SMSs

### **Competency: Resourcefulness**

Learning professionals with horse blinds have a slim chance of survival! Lack of vision aside, another reason for failure is inflexibility. The more resourceful and imaginative a trainer, the better the chances of his or her success. This is especially so in small training departments where resources and money come at a premium. The likelihood of solving problems increases when trainers think of a variety of solutions.

In addition to thinking of a variety of flexible and realistic solutions, being resourceful includes preparing for contingencies. Small training departments live under constant threat of budget cuts. However, when a trainer is asked to cut back on training, he must not assume that a short program cannot create an impact.

### **Thinking Big**

Faced with a cash crunch, a manufacturing unit was forced to suspend training in order to increase productivity hours. At this juncture, the Chief Learning Officer (CLO) advocated "Lunch and Learn" programs. Thanks to his resourcefulness, management could have their cake and eat it too!

A one-man show has never been easy. However, a one-man army can do wonders just by knowing a little about managing a small training department.