

Significance of Training and Post Training Evaluation for Employee Effectiveness: An Empirical Study on Sainsbury's Supermarket Ltd, UK

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Abstract

Knowledge, Skills and attitudes are the most essential ingredient for efficient conduct of business through the human resources of an organization. But the impact of these valuable ingredients is often reduced by lack of effective training program. The research paper tries to highlight the necessity of effective training and after training evaluation in designing and implementing training programs for the employees in the retail sector specifically for Sainsbury's supermarket Ltd, UK. The main purpose of this study is to find the answer of how training refers to the acquisitions of knowledge, skill and attitudes. The paper also facilitates the organization to better understand the necessity of post training evaluation leading to effective employee engagement in designing improved training programs to seize the present and future training opportunities.

Keywords: training, post training evaluation, employee effectiveness

1. Introduction

Training is a performance development process to foster learning new techniques and methods to perform job with fullest efficiency and effectiveness. Successful training and development program assist the strategic requirement of the organization and also satisfies the individual needs of the people working in it. Effective training programs also help the employees to concentrate on their individual career development which ultimately assist to achieve organizational short and long run objectives. To improve efficiency in training programs, organizations should give special attention to employee's participation in designing training methods and modules. Participatory training design motivates the workforce to learn objectively leading to incremental performance development and accelerated professional commitment. To ensure effectiveness of participative training programs, post training evaluation works as an uncompromising tool to design, correct and improve existing and future training needs and methods.

Sainsbury's supermarket Ltd commonly known as Sainsbury's is the oldest and the third largest retail chain established in the year 1869 in London UK. Currently it has 16.5% market share in UK super market sector. It was awarded at SUPERMEAT and fish award category in the year 2011. Sainsbury's have 700 varieties of low priced foods and grocery items for their valued customers. It has a unique corporate responsibility to provide healthy and balanced diet for their customers and to work closely with all the members of the supply chain. According to their annual report 2011 the company's revenue is 21,102 million pound sterling. Currently 15000 employees are working in over 1000 store locations. To be focused on sustainable employee development Sainsbury's has established HR Shared Service Centre expanded to include most HR Processes in their Colleague Administration Department and Occupational Health enquiries in a dedicated unit.

This study on Sainsbury's supermarket Ltd offers an analytical review on the concepts of training, post training evaluation and values involved in doing research on evaluation of training programs based on contemporary literature and primary data.

2. Objective of the Study

The research paper is articulated on Sainsbury's supermarket Ltd- New Cross Gate, United Kingdom that aims to

accomplish the following specific objectives.

- To identify the manager's view and commitment in aiming to offer effective training program for employee's of Sainsbury's Supermarket Ltd.
- To analyse some important issue related to post training evaluation of Sainsbury's Supermarket Ltd based on trainees' feedback.
- To suggest useful guideline to assist Sainsbury's Supermarket Ltd to improve their decisions in developing employee training program and training evaluation.

3. Rational of the Study

Employee training programs help to deliver superior values allied with customer focused quality management, strategic orientation and performance management. It also upholds a strong public reputation of a company as employer brand and supports employee growth and motivation. Broadly the research seeks to enlighten the private retail sector enterprises and specifically the Sainsbury's supermarket Ltd with the knowledge and experience to expand the horizon of training evaluation practices for a sustainable organizational development. The research also highlights the extremes of post training evaluation that facilitates all the stakeholders Sainsbury's supermarket Ltd.

4. Research Methodology

To fulfill the requirement of the objective of the study, an empirical research methodology is followed in the search of excellence. Primary and secondary data were collected to gather information that facilitates the research. Literatures, textbooks, magazine, articles and relevant websites on human resource management and training were reviewed to optimize secondary information and questionnaires and one-to-one semi-structured interviews were designed to obtain primary data. Semi-structured interviews were conducted on the Store, Human Resources and training managers to understand the existing policies and procedures of training and development of Sainsbury's Supermarket Ltd. The interview also reveals a clear picture on the current objectives of training programs of the company. Twenty six questionnaires were distributed to employees who have already received training at Sainsbury's Supermarket Ltd.

5. Literature Review

5.1 Training

According to Bramley (2003) "Training is a process which is planned to facilitate learning so that people can become more effective in carrying out aspects of their work." According to CIPD "Training is an instructor-led and content-based intervention leading to desired changes in behavior and which, unless it is on-the job training, involves time away from the workplace in a classroom or equivalent." Training involves learning. In other word it is part of learning and development. "Training has an important complementary role to play in accelerating individual and organizational learning alongside other, less directive, activities like coaching, mentoring and peer group learning" (Training to Learning, CIPD, 2005). The following Figure 1 shows the process to develop employee's performance and effectiveness through training.

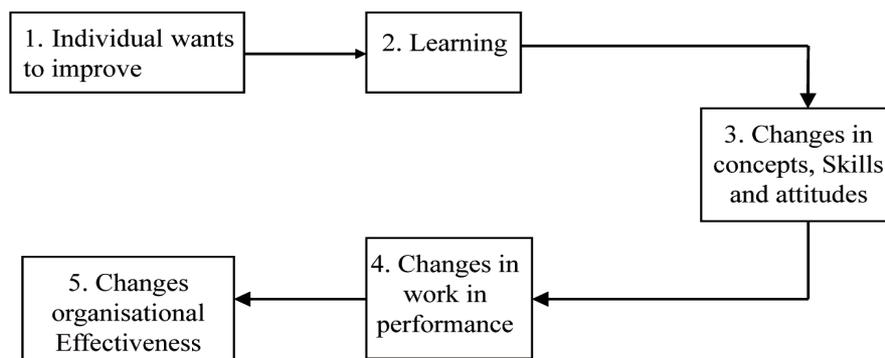


Figure 1. Individual training model

5.2 Importance of Training

The significance and value of training has long been recognized. Consider the popular and often repeated

quotation, “Give a person a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a person to fish and you feed him for a lifetime (McClelland, 2002)”. So training is the process to build up confidence of employees at workplace in terms of better performance. There is no doubt that training play an important role of human resource development to meet the overall objectives of an enterprise. According to CIPD annual survey report of ‘learning and development’ 2006, 85% of respondents reported that ‘training is more geared to meeting the strategic needs of the business’. Due to the changing business climate and growth in technology it is ensured that organization has to respond to provide different kind of training program (Anderson, 1993). Employee Training program can help Increase productivity and quality of work life. Training acts as a caring guardian for the organization as well as for employees. It Increases revenue and reduces staff turnover and absenteeism. Training is not a cost; it is the most sustainable investment of a company to improve the level of motivation of the employee leading to superior customer satisfaction and quality product and service.

5.3 Training Process System

‘Learning event is based on the training process system. Any learning activity that is formally designed in order to achieve specified learning objectives (Hamblin, 1974). This typically involves the following: establishing needs, agreeing the overall purpose and objectives, identifying the profile of the intended learning population, selecting strategy, and agreeing on direction and management, selection of learners and producing a detailed specification, confirmation of strategy and design of the event, delivery, monitoring and evaluation (Harrison’s, 2002 cited by Marchington and Wilkinson, 2006).’ Training is a continuous development cycle. According to Pilbeam & Corbridge, (2002) there are four major stages of the training cycle:

- Identifying Training Needs
- Plan and Design Training
- Delivering Training
- Evaluating Training Outcomes.

Another similar model is the systematic training cycle. According to Critten, (1993) the systematic training cycle explains what information needs to be collected in each of the 4 stages. Before any training is carried out, there should be a clear specification of the nature of the training need. The first step in the process is to assess each person against the job specification, identifying whether there is a gap to be filled between present level of knowledge or skills against the expected standard. Then produce a training plan that includes identifying those who need to be trained, by whom and how (on-the- job or off-the-job). Then training is carried out and recorded. Training results are then evaluated against original need that was previously identified.

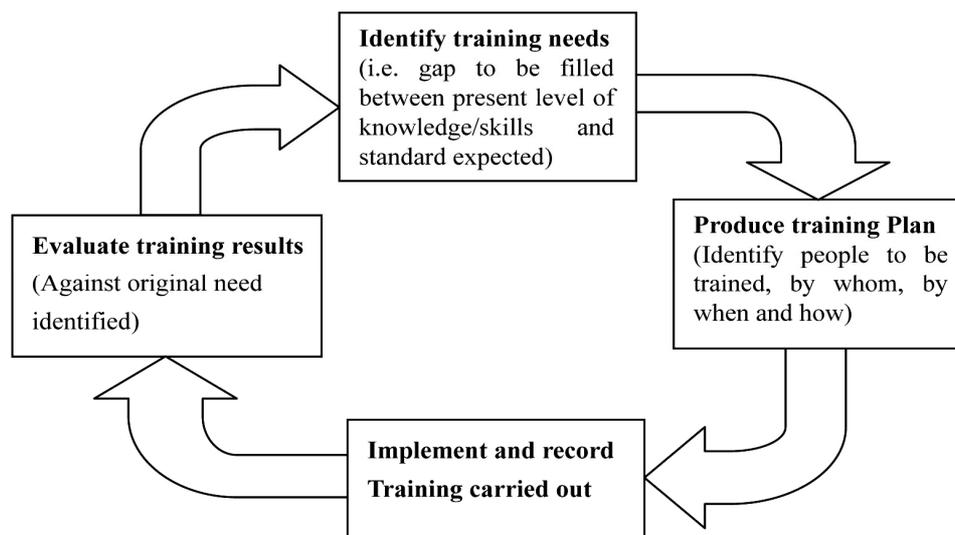


Figure 2. The systematic training cycle

5.4 Training Evaluation

Evaluating Training is the last stage but it is very important part of training cycle. It is a process of gathering information after the implementation of training program which helps to make decision to design effective training program. It also justifies the significance of as training is the most effective intervention of organizational development and change. According to Bramley (2003) there are three main purposes of evaluation:

- Feedback: on the effectiveness of the training activities.
- Control: over the provision of training.
- Intervention: into the organizational processes that affect training.

5.5 Why Evaluate Training

Training is a costly investment for both profitable and nonprofit organizations. But, for the sustainability of the organization it must endeavor this costly operation and inculcate it in the fabric of corporate culture. Training is an integral part of human resource development and through training humans are converted into resources and an organizational capital in future. Effective training converts cost in to profitable, sustainable and renewable investment for the business enterprises. So, the degree of business profitability can be assessed by evaluating the result of training program and it is equally important to identify the purpose of evaluating training carefully. According to Bramley (2003) evaluation can provide clear benefits to be balanced against these costs. These also include:

- Improved quality of training activities.
- Improved ability of the trainers to relate inputs to outputs.
- Better discrimination of training activities between those that are worthy of support and those that should be dropped.
- Better integration of training offered and on-the-job development.
- Better co-operation between trainers and line manager in the development of staffs.

5.6 Kirkpatrick's 4 Levels of Training Evaluation Model

In 1959-1960 Donald Kirkpatrick introduced the idea of evaluating training in a series of articles in the US Training and Development journal. The articles were subsequently included in Kirkpatrick's book

Evaluating Training Programs (1975), published by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD). Kirkpatrick introduced that training program can be evaluated successfully at 4 different levels. Every level is very important and has an impact on the next level. Figure 4 shows how the evaluation process fits together. The 4 levels are:

Level 1 Reaction: How well did the participants react or like the program?

Level 2 Learning: What knowledge (principles, facts and techniques) did participants learn from the program?

Level 3 Behavior / performance: What positive changes in participants' job behavior stemmed from the training program?

Level 4 Results / impact: Is the application of learning achieving results?

6. Primary and Secondary Data Analysis and Findings

6.1 Findings Based on Semi-Structured Interviews

The aim of semi-structured interview was to discover the information about importance of training and evaluating training. Questions were asked regarding the aim of training, how training acts as an effective key to build up confidence among the workforce? Importance of post evaluation training, the alternative of training, costs involved in training, the most effective way people learn in this store etc. The respondents of the semi-structured interviews were Store manager and HR & Training manager.

6.1.1 The Aim of Training

According to the voice of the respondents, the aim of training is to progress and to improve performance. It is to ensure constant improvement of the staffs working in Sainsbury's Supermarket Ltd. They also need to always be aware of new developments, new technology and new products. According to the opinion of the store manager "the aim of training is to ensure that colleagues understand their role and provide them with the means to be

successful in their chosen areas". Training is to develop skills that provide the organisation with skilled employees.

The HR/Personnel manager pointed quite a number of issues relevant to the aims of training: According to his opinion the aim of training is to enable and assist the employees to carry out any tasks the skills with predetermined standard. To develop employees moral or meets career development needs. Well trained personnel delivers better standard aligned with the growth of the business.

6.1.2 Training is the on Key to Build up Confident into Workforce

The store manager agreed with the statement and also said that employees, who are able to fulfil their role as a result of training, gain more job satisfaction then those who are not undertaken training.

6.1.3 Any Alternative of Training?

By the statement of the store manager there is no alternative to training for employee development. He believed that the success of the organisation depends on selection of the right candidates in right time at right place and Primary selection of the right candidates with both intelligence and desire go a long way to a successful organisation.

The views of the personnel manager was the same like others. According to his statement 'Training is the building block of successful organization'. Besides he also mentioned about the use of monthly one-to-one Coaching and Mentoring policy of Sainsbury's Supermarket Ltd.

6.1.4 The Most Effective Way People Learn in Your Store

According to store manager, both On-the-job and Off-the-job training method helps the employees to learn in the store. In the light of his opinion 'there is no substitute for on the job experience; however for competitive requirement off the job training provide valuable insights into bigger picture of development'.

On the other hand the personnel manager said that 'it depends on the individual's learning style and the credibility of the trainer'.

6.1.5 Post Training Evaluation Develops Training Program Effectiveness

Evaluating training is the last stage of training cycle and unquestionably it is the most important part to ensure present and future effectiveness of training program. The store manager emphasized on the certainty of post training evaluation and said that primarily this is based around paper based testing, but it is very important to continuous assessment based on colleague performance and one-to-one assessments.

HR/ personnel manager also agrees with the aforesaid opinions and highlights the inevitability of evaluating training in developing training program to deliver results for the business.

6.2 Questions

6.2.1 Question Number 01: Did You Received Any 'Customer Service', 'Health and Safety' and 'Replenishment' Training?

Table 1. List of training courses and participants

| Training course | Received | Not received |
|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Customer service training | 85% (22/26) | 15% (4/26) |
| Health and safety training | 100% (26/26) | 0% |
| Replenishment training | 77% (20/26) | 23% (6/26) |

The findings shown in table 1 that 100% employee received health and safety training. 85% received Customer service training and Replenishment training received 77%. Four respondents think that they did not receive customer service training and six respondents also think that they did not receive replenishment training.

6.2.2 Question Number 02: The Course Content was Relevant to Requirements

The findings shown in table 2, more than three quarters respondents (77%) 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' that 'Customer service' training course content was relevant to requirements whereas only 8% respondents 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'.

Table 2. Relevancy of course content according to respondents

| Training course | Strongly Agree % | Agree % | Not sure % | Disagree % | Strongly Disagree % |
|----------------------------|------------------|-------------|------------|------------|---------------------|
| Customer service training | 8% (2/26) | 69% (18/26) | 0% | 4% (1/26) | 4% (1/26) |
| Health and safety training | 23% (6/26) | 69% (18/26) | 8% (2/26) | 0% | 0% |
| Replenishment training | 12% (3/26) | 61% (16/26) | 4% (1/26) | 0% | 0% |

On the other hand 92% respondents 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that 'Health & safety' training course content was relevant to requirements. Only 8% not sure about that but on one think that the course content was not relevant to requirements.

73% respondents 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that replenishment training course content was relevant to requirements. Only 4% not sure about that but as like as health & safety training course no one think that the replenishment training course content was not relevant to requirements.

6.2.3 Question Number 03: The Trainer was Able to Provide All the Information Needed for the Course

Table 3. Opinion of respondents about trainer's ability of training

| Training course | Strongly Agree % | Agree % | Not sure % | Disagree % | StronglyDisagree % |
|----------------------------|------------------|-------------|------------|------------|--------------------|
| Customer service training | 19% (5/26) | 46% (12/26) | 8 % (2/26) | 4% (1/26) | 8% (2/26) |
| Health and safety training | 23% (6/26) | 61% (16/26) | 12% (3/26) | 4%(1/26) | 0% |
| Replenishment training | 15% (4/26) | 58% (15/26) | 4% (1/26) | 0% | 0% |

The table 3 shown, 65% of respondents 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that the trainer of customer service training course was able to provide all the information needed for the course whereas 8% respondents 'strongly disagree' and 4% 'disagree', and 8% of respondents not sure about trainer's ability. On the other hand 84% of respondents 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that the health & safety training course's trainer was able to provide all the information needed for the course whereas only 4% of respondents 'disagree' with trainer's ability, but 8% of respondents not sure about trainer's ability.

Most of the respondents (73%) 'Strongly agree' or 'agree' that replenishment training course's trainer was able to provide all the information needed for the course, but only 4% of respondents not sure about this.

7. Recommendations

Organizations are constantly affected by change and to be socialized with the changing nature of the global economic scenario the employees are to be acclimatized with new skills, knowledge and attitudes. To buildup competent and more knowledgeable workforce the following recommendations could be followed by Sainsbury's Supermarket Ltd to obtain competitive strength.

- The systematic training cycle should be followed in order to get the most out of training.
- Kirkpatrick's 10 factors should be considered in the planning and implementation stage of the cycle.
- Build up a good on-the-job training culture can be considered to get full advantage of the training. Such as: coaching, mentoring and counseling.
- Employers need to support and create social learning, training culture to maximize employees' competitive advantage.
- Measuring training programs effectiveness four level evaluating training should be considered.
- Kirkpatrick's four key should be considered for implementing the four levels evaluating training.
- Create a culture of assessment practices and ensure effective of all ineffective initial assessment.
- Line managers should get more involve in training and development process. According to Kirkpatrick If line managers have negative attitudes toward programs, it is not possible evaluate effectively as line managers in each department are best to know their employees.
- Personnel and Store manager should provide support to develop their line managers.
- Create a learning log for developing line managers and meeting with store and personnel manager at list once a month.

- Make sure colleague performance development review maintain in time and effectively.
- Managers need to understand colleague's emotion to get most feedback from them.
- Motivate Trainees to love the training program and to take it as a career investment.
- Trainees gain needed knowledge and skills
- Creating and ensuring an environment where the trainees are able to apply what they have learned.
- Feedback is very important ingredient in the evaluation process. Employees should be communicated with their performance during and after the training.
- Training Performance should be linked with the reward system to encourage employees. Reward for doing things well and they need help and advice if they are not performing up to standard. Most importantly feedback should be given timely, regularly and relevant. Feedback can be given at least twice in a year which can make employees more comfortable to their job.

8. Conclusion

Knowledge, Skills and attitude are the most essential criterion of an employee for efficiently performing the operations in any enterprise. These are the most significant asset in an organization's human resources in achieving competitive advantage. Training helps employees to get a clear view of their job. Training refers to the acquisitions of knowledge and skills and help employees better understand the information they are given. Effective training program is considered a success of achieving enterprise objectives.

The importance of evaluating training within Sainsbury's New Cross Gate was collected through semi-structured interviews and survey, which involved questionnaires. It is recommended that Sainsbury's New Cross Gate identify the purpose of post training evaluation before deciding what information needs to be collected. The company should considered four level of evaluating training for measuring training programs effectiveness. Kirkpatrick's four key should be considered for implementing the four levels evaluating training. Sainsbury's should create a culture of assessment practices and make sure of colleague/employees performance development review maintained timely and effectively. Line managers should get more involve in training and development process as they are the best to know their employees.

However, due to changing of business climate training should not be considered as the only key to develop employees and therefore, look for other alternatives like work based learning, coaching, mentoring and counseling etc.

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