
PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND PROMOTION PROGRAMS IN CAREER MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

Professional training and promotion programs are elaborated by specialists in the field of career management. In elaborating the plans, they must consider a series of factors which contribute to the program's success. Success is based to a large extent on application of several correct and adequate methods all to depend on the subject to be "professionally trained," -employee or manager-, as well as the modality of approach, -external or internal. Finally, the evaluation of the training process represents the metrics of success of any professional training and promotion program. The professional promotion strategy, as short and middle term systematic means to obtain a better job, will be dealt with in the last part of the present study.

Key words: *career, professional training, programs, training methods for employees and managers*

Once instruction requirements have been established, the specialists' role becomes that of creating adequate programs. In order to achieve anticipated objectives, organizers of training programs will elaborate an adequate strategy for each concrete situation.

The designer of a professional training session must take into account the following aspects [1]:

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- **theoretical elements** are valuable to the extent to which they can be applied to the student's job. Their role is to provide guidelines, explain the causes and promote achievements and performance;
 - **experience** is an important component of the professional training process. The program designer will take into consideration the students' active participation;
 - **communication** is a difficult issue of all practical activities. An adequate number of classes will be allotted to this issue within projection of the training plan.
 - **attitude changes** follow behaviour changes.

The program organizer must take into consideration that people learn in different ways and that their learning capacity is influenced, by a series of qualities facilitators have. In elaborating the professional training program, the number of classes, course duration, starting level and evaluation system are to be taken into account.

Several compartments with specific activities are urged to participate in professional training program design. The following issues should be addressed in order for the program to be relevant and efficient: Objectives of programs pursued; Expectations from participants in the program; Program content and content structure; Learning methods and program leader; Venue and timeline of instruction sessions; Participants' feedback on type and program coverage; Evaluation of success rate;

It is imperative to know that training sessions are output-focused.

Training methods are the means by which we intend to communicate the information to students' ideas, skills, attitudes and feelings. Training methods suited for developing knowledge and understanding capacities in a work context may be located:

- outwardly, when training activities take place outside the current professional workplace: reports/discussions, classroom training, programmed training, group discussions, case study analysis, simulation exercises.

- at the workplace, when training activities take place in the current professional workplace: training on the post (at the workplace), learning from the work mates experience, mentoring/guidance, tasks delegation, separations, special projects.

In general, where professional retraining occurs outside the work environment, the focus is on acquiring general and transferable skills, while the other type of training, at the workplace, focuses on specific skills, added to the occupied post.

The diversity of professional training requirements leads to the existence of a large number of methods, among which the followings have a broad applicability:

professional training at the workplace, professional training with the aim of fulfilling job responsibilities, job rotation, participation in heterogeneous work groups, participation as a trainer in training programs, participation in meetings.

The professional training at the workplace involves the evolution of the forming process in real professional situations, and it can be achieved through: post specific training performed by certain chosen persons, training through apprenticeship mainly used for people engaged in craft activities and laboratory training which focuses on the emotional formation and on formation of a certain behaviour.

For employees who work in some departments and even for the managers, professional training methods can be used with the aim of fulfilling the job responsibilities such as: participation in project elaboration, works and studies and confrontation of students with real problems, never previously encountered; delegation of new tasks which make the employee acquire new skills and professional knowledge; temporary replacement of head of the hierarchy used for the professional training of managers.

Job rotation implies the switch of a person to another post, from the same department or from different departments, thus allowing for establishment of potential employee's development and post identification in which his performances could be maximal.

By participating in heterogeneous work groups, employees improve their professional training by learning from other participants, by knowing their opinions and solutions.

Participation as a trainer in training programs, persuade employees to self-determine their training requirements, because no matter of how well prepared they might be, for this activity they need to bring up to date their training and acquire new knowledge.

Meeting attendance may give a more complete image of the organization and of the problems it faces, but it can also be an opportunity to share information, ideas and opinions about problem solving, participants having the opportunity to know other areas than those they currently face.

Managerial training requires solid theoretical and practical knowledge. Training is a prerequisite for both future managers and current ones. It can be conducted under various forms and by different specialized institutions. It is important that the best alternative be chosen every time, with maximum goal-oriented efficiency.

The diverse methods used for managerial development may be categorized as follows [2]:

Managerial education – courses organized by universities or other colleagues from the public sector, finalized with a graduation certificate – for

instance an MBA diploma, management diplomas, and other professional certificates issued upon examination by the personnel management institute; the work level is considered job experience and the focus rests on knowledge achievement and theory.

Managerial training – off-production internal and external courses, focusing on specialized knowledge and job skills achievement that require an effort of learning through experience with the use of practical exercises included in the syllabus.

Learning through experience – “study through practice”, in other words, job exercise usually supported and guided by a superior or more experienced colleague

Most of the contemporary approaches concerning managerial development are based on learning through practical experience directly on the job, leaving the theoretical courses in the background. The most widespread practical methods are: guidance / controlled practice, mentorship, delegation, projects, transfer / jobs rotation.

Practical methods for managerial development

METHOD	MAIN FEATURES	SPECIFIC ADVANTAGES
Guidance / Controlled practice / Mentorship	The manager’s deliberate and planned involvement in the junior managers’ / trainees’ guidance and support for attaining a proficient job performance. It requires assisted learning through discovery.	Relevance for the learner, enhanced cooperation. Optimal feedback for the learner.
Delegation	The manager attributes specific responsibilities, authority, and resources. Proficiency is permanently monitored.	Learner has the opportunity to take real responsibility for results.
Projects	Either a single person or a team focus attentively on a problem or particular occasion in order to work out a solid proposition in a given time frame.	Projects may ensure a high degree of involvement and commitment. They use problem-solving and negotiation skills.
Transfers	The manager is appointed to a position in another department or organization for a limited period of time.	Valuable experience gained from carrying out assigned tasks. Individual proficiency is tested.

Source: G.A. Cole, Personnel Management, CODECS SA Publishing House, 2000

The managers’ training process has three distinct stages: the initial training that stimulates the managers’ interest in learning, the actual training and

the post-training period when support is ensured for applying acquired knowledge. Training has to be adapted to participants' real needs and possibilities; otherwise, losing efficacy becomes a risk.

Assessment is concerned with vast and numerous matters (issues) including not only students and their trainers, but also the learning context, course syllabus, teaching methods and materials used within the program.

In his work 'Evaluation and Control of Training' (1974), A. C. Hamblin identified a number of assessment strategies directly related to training effects. According to Hamblin, training can cause a chain reaction within the organization and for each decisive stage a specific evaluation (assessment) strategy can be selected (chosen): training based assessment; evaluation focused on students' reactions; assessment focused on the learning process; evaluation of work-oriented behaviour; organizational development-oriented evaluation; cost - benefit analysis.

Assessors have several methods of data collection at their disposal. Here are the most important ones: Interviews with involved persons (concerned parties)/questionnaires (surveys) - include predetermined (pre-established) or relatively free (open) questions, exploratory questions etc; behavioural observations made by external observers such as qualified trainers or line managers / supervisors; testing/verifying acquired knowledge and skills through practical (practical tests); analysis of used teaching / learning materials; analysis of records on improvements within organization.

Collected information informs the database on which assessment depends, that is, value assessment and utility level. Finally, evaluation results are made available to one or more parties involved: former and potential participants, managers, responsible for (in charge of) training activities. Many evaluations never get to go beyond the training department, the results being used to change future courses in view of obtained feedback, others will be available to people who take final decisions.

Staff efficiency improvement represents the objective of professional training assessment. The purpose of training assessment implies evaluation of proposed target achievement. Evaluation of a professional training program can take place on four levels: feedback (impression/reaction/echo), learning, behaviour and results [3].

Feedback assessment refers to learners' satisfaction with the quality of taught courses, assessment of usefulness. The main investigation method is based on a survey on session theme, assessment of trainers, personal benefit, suggestions for course quality improvement, etc.

Learning, the second stage in a professional training programme assessment, resides in measuring professional knowledge accumulated by the trainees. For this, the following are necessary: operating with quantitative and

objective data, performing assessments before and after training programme, using in parallel a control group together with the experimental group, statistical analysis of performance data to underscore the learning significance accomplished through the respective programme. Computer based training makes way for using diverse and highly effective assessment techniques. Instantly the data is collected, processed, and represented in various ways.

Behaviour assessment is the most difficult activity. For determination of practical efficiency of a training programme, some reference points have been suggested: Efficiency assessment before and after the training; Performance evaluation by colleagues, superiors and subordinates; Statistical report on differences between prior and post-training behaviour; Post-training evaluation, after three or four months at least, of training effects, to allow sufficient time to make use of collected data.

Determination of professional training results or programme improvement is a final stage in any training programmes assessment process. This time corporate terms are provided: Superior quality products; Increasing personnel numbers able to reach the target; Decreasing production time; Decreasing damages and tool deterioration; Declining absenteeism; Decreasing scraps; Decreasing production cost; Increasing performance on assessment instruments.

Professional training is a continuous and relatively expensive process. A fair cost measurement and benefit assessment are difficult processes which require consideration of multiple and diverse elements and effects. Still, in every case, training will not achieve its goals if the real needs of organization and individual are not taken into account.

Professional promotion strategies, as systematic short and medium range way to obtain a better job, implies: career planning; career self-development; professional development. As follows, I will enlarge on the aspects connected to career planning. This becomes possible if aided by: Career planning handbooks; Promotion scales; Career group planning workshops; Career advisers; Performance feedback sessions; Assessment interviews; Psychological testing; Assessment centres

Handbooks career planning are guides developed by organizations that include:

- a presentation of the organization career policy, the main potential career options within the organization and the means that employees can use to assure their career information;
- a glossary of terms used in human resource decisions, such as job analysis, job description, remuneration structure, performance assessment, assessment centres;

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- a general approach in the organization structure, career paths ensuing from the corresponding structure and general job qualifications for the jobs found along different scales of career promotion;
 - a chapter of questions and exercises designed to guide individual introspection and introspective thinking regarding personal strong and weak points skills;
 - an orientation section of questions and exercises continued in the handbook and a discussion regarding the necessary skills to do these exercises, so that each employee would be able to figure out in what stage he is, where he want to get, what objectives are accessible for him, what skills he has and what skills must he develop.

Career promotion ladders are graphics designed by organizations that illustrate the horizontal and the vertical movement of employees from one job to another within an organization, specifying not only the experience and training requirements but also the salary for each job, these ladders having the purpose to help employees to understand the possibilities of promotion and thus motivating them to mobilize for this purpose, namely, to determine the supervisors and managers not to block the employees that surpassed their level on the same position.

Group workshops in career planning are ad hoc workshops organized by the companies, referring to the debate of career plans individually prepared, the group can help individuals to perceive better the chances and risks and thus, errors and omissions made in the plan elaboration, to offer alternatives to the plan and therefore the possibility of changing or even replacing it, to strengthen their self confidence and increase their motivation to carry out the plan, to acquire the feeling that the information discussed and the created group affinity transform participants in partners which are well prepared and close enough to consult them in the foundation of their career plans.

Career counselling, organized both formally (by human resources professionals, specialized counselling, directly by the head) and informally (by colleagues, friends, relatives) is the type of counselling offered by organizations which involve discussion with each employee about the achieved performance, the interests that animate him, the goals to which he yearns, the objectives he intended, the potential he has, respectively, the job and possible directions for promotion and the changes taking place in his field or in the concerned location.

Performance feedback sessions are cyclical meetings (biannual, annual) organized by the companies in which the supervisor and the employee asses the performance achieved in the cycle (biannual, annual) respectively, on this basis, performance objectives that the organization requires for the employee

and namely, the career development needs that the employee feels. The meeting concludes with a special form recorded by the supervisor of the employee's promotion potential assessment and the estimated time when the employee would be ready for promotion.

Appraisal interviews are regular interpersonal meetings held by companies between an interviewer or a team of interviewers and employees with promotion potential, these meetings allowing the organization to reassess the human resources that can rely in case it becomes necessary to fill up a higher post, and employees, to reveal their value and to express their interest for the positions in the hierarchy.

Psychological testing is an organizational objective procedure for personality assessment (features, attitudes, behaviour, and mentalities), intelligence (logical reasoning, spatial relationship), skills (memory, spatial perception, driving skills), competencies (skilfulness, calculations, expression, writing), and interests (pleasure and uneasiness) of employees correlated with the requirements of personality, intelligence, skills, competencies and interests of the job they aspire to promote.

Assessment centres are specialized institutions hired by organizations, all staff conducting assessments being performed by groups of 10-12 persons, during a one-week session (50-60% of the time spent on interviewing, testing and training through discussions without leader, simulation exercises, and role play and the rest is spent on assessments of writing, discussing and reporting results), and these sessions ending with a feedback session (of briefing participants on their achieved results and suggestions for improving their results).

All this is necessary when a certain job is targeted. Likewise, we need to convince ourselves that the job is proper. Instead, it is necessary to analyze both the job description (title, organizational position, salary grade, salary date, branch, division, department, sector, attributions, performance standards) and the specification (training, experience, necessary ingenuity, responsibility, contracts, subordination, mental effort, physic effort, work conditions) of the job.

If after this analysis has been performed, we are convinced that the job is proper, it is then necessary to validate our conviction by analyzing the essential characteristics of the job: Competence variety is the degree in which the job requires a completely different range of activities in fulfilling the labour, implying a number of competences for the person; Task identity is the job performance from beginning to end with a visible result; Task significance is the degree to which the job has considerable influence on other people's lives; Autonomy is the degree to which the job gives considerable individual freedom and independence in the work schedule and in determining the procedures that are going to be used; Job feedback is the degree to which the fulfilment of the work activity required by

the job gives the individual direct and clear information regarding the efficiency of his performance.

Even if we are convinced that the chosen job as a career objective is proper, we must take into account the following [4]: As long as career evolution is itself a fundamental investment both on our side and on the organization's- we invest time, talent and effort and organization's financial resources- it is necessary to think of our career in economic terms of costs and benefits, benefits minus costs resulting in profit. The optimal situation is when the organization efficiency is correlated with the individual satisfaction; The more ambitious the objectives are, the harder to achieve they are. The greater therefore the risk to fail, to fall into disappointment, anxiety, de-motivation and lack of loyalty. It is necessary to realize that lasting happiness can be obtained only through avoiding the last promotion, choosing, at a particular point of promotion, the solution to abandon promotion, practicing what it might be called „statism”; It is necessary to go methodically through all the stages preceding a target, knowing that hasty completion of these stages dilutes our formation and postpones target achievement. This means that we can approach a career target if and only if we meet the requirements of the previous target in which professional formation and development are determined.

Despite appearances, our career depends more on the rhythm of scientific, technological and administrative changes than on present circumstances, on the situation and interests of our spouse and children than ours, and, as a matter of fact, the way to promotion goes through the success of organization, not through personal achievements.

It is a fact that fulfilment of our career implies that both us and our families are sacrificing to dedicate our entire lives to an effort based on self and professional development.

Costs and benefits of a training program

Costs:	Benefits:
Instructors/trainers wages	Increase of sales production
Students/trainees wages	Cost reduction
Equipment costs (necessary materials, classroom equipment)	Increase of productivity
Transport and accommodation costs for trainers and trainees	Increase of quality
Production losses	Turnover reduction
	Decrease in the need to supervise
	Flexibility and familiarization with new demands
	Decrease of error number
	Improve the organizational climate
	Positive attitude change

Conclusion

The importance of training programs becomes more and more important as competition between market companies increases. However, in Romania, these courses are not advertised among many companies, even though there are also tax incentives for their implementation and employers are requested to offer training programs to their employees. The main problems in program implementation are the costs and the fact that employees must take time from work to attend them.

Under these circumstances in which the financial and economic crisis is still felt by many companies which lay off a great number of employees, it is much harder for those organizations to offer their employees the possibility of attending training programs. One of the solutions will have to come from the state which should offer solid tax incentives to the organizations which offer their employees the possibility of attending training programs, and, it is also very important that their participation in these programs should generate the added value both for employees and company (that should diminish its costs)

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