

A Case Study of Employee Training and Retention
at Company ABC.

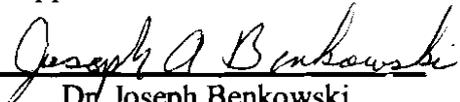
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ABSTRACT

This case study examines the relationship of employee training and employee retention at Company ABC. There is a need for the study for Company ABC so the company can have a competitive edge, a foundation of solid employees, and a secure future of quality leaders.

This study is to evaluate Company ABC's training program concentrating on the first nine months of training and determine how it has impacted employees' career in their position. After an interview with several members of management at Company ABC, the researcher's own experience at the company, and gathering literature, the researcher is comparing the information gathered to the information gathered in the comparative study paper that includes a survey of 20 questions developed by utilizing

SelectSurvey and contributions from subject matter experts. The population of the survey is approximately 7,700 people.

The returned surveys will be analyzed using several statistical methods to determine any relevant correlation between new employees, their training, and employee retention.

This information will be presented to the company for their own evaluation along with the researcher's recommendations.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Company Background

This study is to analyze and evaluate how the first three to six months of a new employee's training impacts the longevity of their career at that company, this case, the researcher evaluates Company ABC. Granted, the length of training will vary from business to business; however, it is the basic concept of the importance of proper training is to the career of a new employee at any company.

Company ABC, located in the Midwest, is a residential builder and is a FORTUNE 500 company with operations in over 50 markets and 25 states. In 2005, the company delivered over 450,000 homes in the United States and generated consolidated revenues of \$14.7 billion.

In 2005, Company ABC received the most awards in the J.D. Power and Associates New Home-Builder Customer Satisfaction Study making this the sixth-straight year Company ABC achieved this recognition among America's largest homebuilding companies. Their operations were highest-ranked in 16 markets and were among the top three in 22 of 27 markets in which it qualified.

Company ABC is the parent owner of Company XYZ making it the nation's largest builder of active adult communities for people age 55 and better. Company XYZ is traditionally known in Arizona and Florida for their devotion and quality to building active adult communities. It is Company A's, also owned by Company ABC, operations that are nationally recognized for a proprietary building system that has delivered more than 25,000 "Built Solid" homes in Florida since 1960.

Company ABC's two most important objectives are customer satisfaction and training its employees. The organization's philosophy to its customers is to provide the highest quality in the best locations and continue to delight the customer. The employees are the backbone of the company; Company ABC provides a challenging environment founded on equality and opportunity for career-orientated individuals to achieve their professional goals.

Problem Statement

How does training impact the role of the new employee? There are a few areas of training that are crucial. One, the training needs to be effective. Two, is the commitment of training; it takes time, money, and patience. And lastly, evaluation and follow up of training. It is to examine the correlation between the employee and the training provided to keep the best employees on the job instead of a growing turnover rate. There is a need for the study for Company ABC so the company can have a competitive edge, a foundation of solid employees, and a secure future of quality leaders. In response to the study findings, this paper will evaluate the effectiveness of Company ABC's training program and how the first six months impact the longevity of the employee's employment in that position.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate Company ABC's training program concentrating on the first nine months of training and determine how it has impacted employees' career in their position. It is also to education the top levels of management on how important training is and to pinpoint a list of best practices to use. This information will be presented to the company for their own evaluation.

Assumptions of the Study

It is assumed that the researcher of the comparative study paper by Sally Kaiser (2006) has written, gathered, and calculated information appropriately. It is assumed the participants fully understood the survey questions. In the case of Company ABC, there are distinctions between employee levels for the interview questions; however, the researcher assumes all levels of employees go through the same or similar type of training program.

Definition of Terms

Employee Orientation: Employee orientation programs are a form of employee training designed to introduce new employees to their job, the people they will be working with, and the larger organization. (Klein & Weaver, 2000)

Organization Socialization: the process by which employees learn about and adapt to new jobs, roles, and the culture of the workplace. (Klein & Weaver, 2000)

Skill Transfer: a process whereby all or a portion of the skills and knowledge of one employee or job classification is transferred to another employee or employee job classification. (Anderson, 1993)

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to the information given by the interviewers and the literature review; there was no direct survey given to those working at Company ABC. This study is also limited to the limitations set by the researcher of the comparative study paper. Those limitations are: 1) the study may be generalized to non member employers of the organization, and 2) the study may be generalized to those outside of Wisconsin geographical region.

Methodology

After an interview with several members of management at Company ABC, the researcher's own experience at the company, and gathering literature, the researcher is comparing the information gathered to the information gathered in the comparative study paper that includes a survey of 20 questions developed by utilizing SelectSurvey and contributions from subject matter experts. The population of the survey is approximately 7,700 people.

The returned surveys will be analyzed using several statistical methods to determine any relevant correlation between new employees, their training, and employee retention.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

There are many documented articles and books on how to train, when to train, and techniques of training; however, what is the real impact of training? What classifies a good or effective training? To understand the reasons great training is necessary for the future of an employee, there needs to be an understanding of what training is and reasons organizations should train. This comparative study used Sally Kaiser's (2006) publication for comparison.

The Importance

There are several ways companies can gain competitive edge with their competitors; technology, products, research and development, etc. However, one aspect of survival in the marketplace is employees. Organizations can enhance their employees through training by teaching skills, improve performance, and acquire behaviors. (Cadwell, 1995) Cadwell stated: "Training can help your employees work up to their potential" (pp. 13).

How does a company actually find employees that will be successful? Can the organization mold people how they want them? Recruiting potential employees can be "a hit or miss affair..." according to Prentice Hall Editorial Staff (1993) in the Small Business Survival Guide (pp. 169). Hiring the wrong person can be a very costly error; the most important is to decide the qualities the company wants in an employee and train thereafter.

There is no one beginning point to building a quality workforce—just as there is no ending point. Part of building a top-notch workforce is making sure you hire

the right people. But it certainly doesn't end there. Smart business owners know that training and motivating new workers so they perform at maximum efficiency is equally important as the hiring process. (Prentice Hall Editorial Staff, 1993, pp. 169)

Cadwell relays that having effective training will, therefore, produce benefits for the organization and efficient employees. Employees can have greater job satisfaction, be more accepted within their peers, attain a higher self-esteem and self-respect, and potentially advance in the organization with increased earnings and lower turnover rate.

Giving the new employee the information needed to perform the job is crucial. Expectations are set to what he/she expects from the supervisors, what the supervisors expect of him/her, introductions are done from the company and current employees, and how he/she fits into the picture. (McLarney, 1964, pp. 397)

...lack of a training program give warning to the newcomer that he had better not invest too much of himself in a company that has no real plans for his future. If he has another job offer on the string, he may not stay around long enough to give the company a chance to work out a plan for him. Labor statistics indicate that about three-fourths of the quits are people with less than six months of service in the company.

The need for an effective training program is apparent to get the employee started on the right path. McLarney says that inducting and training are the two key elements in retaining the newly hired employee.

How to Start

Designing a top-notch orientation program for new employees is a way to grab the employees' attention the very first day. That first day is the employees' first real look at the company and how it is organized. Too many times organizations fail to understand the importance of that first impact; not only for the benefit of the employees but for the organization as well. Judith Brown, author of online article (viewed 2006) states:

“Orienting employees to their workplaces and their jobs is one of the most neglected functions in many organizations. An employee handbook and piles of paperwork are not sufficient anymore when it comes to welcoming a new employee to your organization. The most frequent complaints about new employee orientation are that it is overwhelming, boring, or that the new employee is left to sink or swim. The result is often a confused new employee who is not productive and is more likely to leave the organization within a year.”

It is so crucial that orientation programs are carefully thought out and planned to help educate the newly hired employees about the company, its history, values, and goals. It does take time and commitment to create such a program; however, the benefits and the results from implementing one are almost invaluable. Brown continues to assert:

“A well thought out orientation program, whether it lasts one day or six months, will help not only in retention of employees, but also in productivity.

Organizations that have good orientation programs get new people up to speed faster, have better alignment between what the employees do and what the organization needs them to do, and have lower turnover rates.

There are some key elements in implementing an employee orientation program: 1) to develop job expectations, instill positive attitudes and job satisfaction, 2) to save time for supervisor, 3) to reduce employee turnover, 4) to reduce employees' anxiety, and 5) to reduce costs (Brown). This will communicate to the employees what is to be expected of them and what they can expect from their new employer, it decreases the employees' anxieties about starting a new role and replaces it with a warm welcoming with a sense of value and instilling a positive attitude and a willingness to be productive.

A new term introduced into the human resource language in the last five years is a hybrid of what was traditionally called "orientation" is now referred to "on-boarding." When compared to a traditional orientation program, on-boarding is a lengthy process that may last for a series of months versus one or two days.

To assist companies in reducing new-hire turnover and the learning curve of new employees, they are expanding their traditional orientation process to the on-boarding process. A traditional style orientation process consists of paperwork, reviewing the handbook, and meeting department staff.

According to Kevin Wheeler (2002) in comparing the orientation process to the on-boarding process, the on-boarding process may involve information about introducing new employees to senior management, familiarizing the new staff with the past and future direction of the organization, and convey the culture of the organization. As a result of this, the new employees are able to make decisions based off the values and the goals of the company. With introducing the on-boarding process, it creates a comfortable work environment and work relationships to make for a more productive organization.

The main aspect of on-boarding involves nurturing an employee for a period of time through a controlled environment while on a training time-line. By following a structured schedule, it will be guaranteed that the new employee will be introduced to the important aspects of their job and the organization. In addition, each new hire will be assigned a mentor. This is the long term focus of on-boarding; it keeps the new hire on track to be able to reach the training goals. The mentors are able to revisit different topics and evaluate the progress of the new hire.

Wheeler also introduced steps on how to create a customized on-boarding program. These tips include: 1) make the process formal and structured but don't forget to have fun and be creative, 2) there needs to be an understanding of the time constraint to develop an effective on-boarding program; this time table takes up to six months or longer to fully complete and implement an effective program, 3) the use of internal technologies can help save money, engage the new hires, and provide the most recent, up-to-date information about the company, 4) from top level down make sure the company is showing the proper example; practice what you preach so the employee understands the culture and is better equipped to make decisions, 5) train current employees to be mentors to help guide the new employee learn the processes of the company and provide feedback on the new hires' progress.

The extent of the on-boarding program will depend on the size of the company and the position being filled. Creating this program will help make new employees feel as if they are an important asset of the company. It will generate rewards over time to give back to the company by reducing turn over and create a more productive work force in a shorter period of time.

The on-boarding is not just owned by one department; it is a partnership with key players and all areas in the organization. It is important that managers from all levels in all departments understand the benefits and structure of the program. After the development of the program and roles are assigned, the on-boarding can result in that new employees understand and fit within the culture of the organization, know the expectations of them and the company, and is more apt to contribute to the organization. Before they begin their new role, they already feel like they are a part of the team.

With these thoughts on orientation and on-boarding, it has proven the importance that training is very high. There are different ways of training and depending on the employee or the job there are some ways that are better than others that will make the employees' first couple of days more enjoyable.

A study performed by H. J. Klein and N. A. Weaver in 2000 focused on the impact of formal orientation programs for socializing new hires. The study's research was in a large educational facility and focused on 116 new employees. Fifty five new employees voluntarily attended the orientation program; the remaining did not attend but were still evaluated, studied, and compared. From the study, two main observations were that the orientation was significantly related to the organizational commitment of those who attended the program than those that did not attend, and those that attended were more socialized in the goals, values, history, and people than those non-attendees. Attending orientation programs should obviously help increase the new employee's awareness and understanding of the company's goals and values and employees cannot adhere on the organization's goals, values, and beliefs if they are not made aware them. Klein and Weaver go on to state that even though awareness cannot assure employee's

acceptance, having those goals and values presented, explained, and observed by others should facilitate acceptance and lead to better productivity by that employee.

Types of Training to Consider

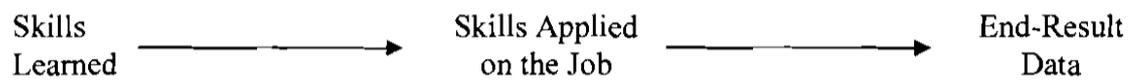
There are concerns about current training programs companies have and whether they are adequate enough to give the proper training needed. Training cannot cease after providing solely an orientation/on-boarding experience. Concerns of money, time constraints, being result orientated, and change seems to affect the adequacy of a training program. Different techniques, such as On-the-Job Training (OJT), are used to help lessen the load of concern. (Lawson, 1997, pp. 2)

In one manufacturing company, they used a process called the skill transfer process which is transferring skills and knowledge from one employee or job classification to the next employee or job classification to help develop new and current employees. Determining the employees who produce the largest amount of return on investment is one of the first steps in the process. “The goal of this strategy is to develop the existing work force to handle all future tasks.” (Anderson, 1993, pp. 48)

A case study done in November of 2006 in American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy introduces the idea of problem-based learning for training and development of employees. This method of training has five steps that lead to conclusion and evaluation of the resources students/employees gained and analyze how the problem could be managed better. Some of this is focused on previous experiences to help teach and build knowledge with new and current participants. This method was used in a medical field to help “develop the skills for critical thinking, self-directed learning, communication, and collaboration.”

Training Impact & Return on Investment

To understand how training impacts the company, consider this analysis done: one company's sales staff is able to attain annual sales of \$350,000 while the second company's sales staff is only able to draw in \$275,000. This particular circumstance, the underlying issue in the second company is lack of knowledge and skills from the sales staff; therefore, training is in order. Reports were done before and after the 13 week training sessions to understand the benefit in dollars. Prior to the training, sales in the second company were \$5,500 per week. After the training, sales increase to \$6,700. (Gains Robinson & Robinson, 1989, pp. 229). The model that was developed is called Validation of Causal Link:



This is directly related to adult learning principles which state that adults learn better when they understand the purpose of the training and can relate it directly to how it will impact them in relationship to their job.

The organization can benefit by increased productivity including accuracy, improved quality, both people, products, and service, and increased levels of customer satisfaction. (Cadwell, 1995, pp. 12-13)

How does a company know if training is making an impact for the company? Is there a monetary benefit? Is there a cultural benefit? Will a company give money towards training and development of their employees if there is no return on their investment?

Robert M. Brown Jr. and John T. Eggers (2005) stated:

It is the individual's growth and development as well as learning and a positive organizational change that creates return-on-investment. To be successful, this feat takes effort on the part of the participant's top leadership group, the participant and the organization to create an effective 'learning organization' that establishes a positive environment for leadership and management development.

To evaluate the return-on-investment Brown and Eggers suggest using Donald Kirkpatrick's four levels of effective training evaluation. The first level is reaction. This level focuses on the participants reactions to the training program. The second level is learning. This level focuses on the participants learning. The third level is behavior. This level examines the participants' behavioral change based on the training program. The fourth level is results. This level focuses on organizational impact, such as reduction in turnover, greater quality, increase in sales, and much more. In some cases, the results might not hold solid proof, but it does hold evidence of positive change. (Brown and Eggers, 2005)

Clive Shepherd states return-on-investment is evaluated to justify the costs of training, improvements of training, selection of future training programs, and to validate it as a business tool. The criteria of measuring the success are direct and indirect costs, performance change, reactions, learning, and change in behavior are to name a few to measure the costs of the inputs from the company to the outputs and benefits of the participants. (Shepherd, 1999)

Chapter III: Methodology

This study is focusing on the impact that organizations can have on newly hired employees and how they can retain them to lower turnover rates, increase productivity, and a healthy work environment. The purpose of this study is to identify common areas of different orientation methods and training methods to develop the most effective way to bring new employees into the business and retain them.

In addition to this literature review, interviews of experienced Vice Presidents (VP), General Managers (GM), Project Managers (PM), Project Committee were performed, the researcher identified with another study that focused on the relationship between employee orientation programs, training programs, and turnover rates and the impact on the organization. To learn more about the impact of these programs, the researcher chose to do a comparative study with that study which included a qualitative research methodology and a 20 question survey. The following sections will begin with Company ABC and follow into the comparative study's data collection, analysis, and comparison.

Company ABC Subject Selection

The subjects selected to participate in the interviews at Company ABC were a combination of President, Vice Presidents of Construction, Customer Relations, and Sales, Project Managers of Construction, General Managers of Customer Relations, and members of Project Committees. The entire population was used; there was no sample selection due to each individual's voluntary participation. There was a variety of departments used in these interviews to get a perspective on each branch of the

company's operation. The interview question sheet (Appendix A) shows each question given to the participants.

Data Collection Procedures

An eight question interview sheet was given to each participant in advanced of the actual interview. The researcher conducted the interview thereafter. The interview sheet stated the consent insert that explained the risk, benefits, and procedures of the interview process assuring confidentiality.

Data Analysis

The questions answered by each participant was analyzed by the researcher and put into categories of consistent or non-consistent to measure the compatibility of thinking across each department.

Limitations

The population size is very small and each participant received the questions ahead of the actual interview which could have lead to solicited collaborative answers between departments to 'appear' to have compatibility.

Comparative Study's Subject Selection

The selected participants of this study included Wisconsin employers who are members of the state professional council. Since no sampling method was conducted, the population size was 7,700 representing a variety of industries and a variety of positions within their company. To increase response, the president of the council sent out the cover letter via email distribution that included an Internet survey link and consent form.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire included demographics, orientation section, training components, and employee review section. The draft of the survey was sent to SVRI to be reviewed by SME (Subject Matter Experts) where some items were changed to create the final approved draft. The survey was also converted into a web-based program, SelectSurvey.

Data Collection Procedures

The 20 question survey sent out by the council's president was accompanied by the researcher's cover letter outlined the risk, benefits, and procedures. Those who participated had a total of eight days to complete the survey. The data from the completed surveys were collected by the SelectSurvey program.

Data Analysis

The data collected through SelectSurvey was uploaded into a Windows Excel spreadsheet. Once assigned numerical aliases the data was exported to SPSS (Statistical Program for Social Sciences); which was used to calculate frequency, percentage, and Pearson Chi-Square analysis of each question.

Limitations

Firstly, an introduction letter could have been used to give participants a forewarning of a survey coming to warm up to the idea of participating. Secondly, a follow up letter could have been used to remind them of the survey and stress the importance of their participation to help increase the response rate. And lastly, the wording of the question or answers to the questions could have been reworded to be clearer or should have used the Likert Scale for more straightforward answers.

Summary and Reasoning for the Comparative Study

Company ABC used interviewing questions and extensive literature review along with the personal experience of the researcher at Company ABC. The interview sheet was given to each participant ahead of the actual interview. The responses to the questions were very informative and analyzed to see if there is a collaborative way of thinking at Company ABC. Two limitations were identified to include the population size being relatively small and due to the instrument being given early could have hindered the response to the question if the participants collaborated on their responses.

The study found for the comparison used a survey to a population size of 7,700 to members of the Wisconsin professional association identifying a large scale of various industries. The collection of data was uploaded into a web-based instrument, SelectSurvey, to be exported into Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and SPSS to analyze the responses using frequency, percentages, and Chi-Squared analysis. Three limitations were recognized to include two ways to improve the survey return rate and the survey instrument design.

From the information gathered at Company ABC and from the experience of the researcher at Company ABC, the researcher found another study that had very similar characteristics, intentions, and purpose to perform a comparative study. Though no survey was performed for Company ABC, the information gathered and the experience of the researcher of Company ABC is very comparable to the information gathered by compared study.

Chapter IV: Results

In this study concerning with the first months of employment for a new employee is compared with another study concerning with the relationship of training programs and employee retention rates. The study at Company ABC and the comparative study are very similar in goals and objectives: 1) Identify areas of improvement, 2) find a correlation between training employees and keeping employees at the company (employee retention), and 3) outlining any best practices for continued success.

The Comparison

In the comparative study, the majority of the surveyed had more than 100 people employed in their business; Company ABC also has more than 100 people employed in its business. From a member of Company ABC that was interviewed: "...it can be said that the more people in a company, the higher the turnover rate; not in our case. Our turnover rate is less than 3%. A lot of it has to do with the quality of the orientation and training programs."

With that information compared to the comparative study's information, there is no significance found in relation (based on the Pearson Chi-Square) to the percentage of turnover rate to the 'yes' or 'no' answer to whether the company had a training program. The cross tabulation of 96% said yes to having a training program while retaining a five percent or less turnover rate; and two other brackets of 11-20% and >21% of turnover have all answered 100% 'yes' to having a training program.

Another interviewee at Company ABC stated: "Allowing new employees to see the main office and get a tour of our work locations helps ease them into the environment of which they will be working. Introductions are done to everyone in the main office as

well as our other locations. In addition, our wall of pictures (head-shots of all employees with their names and departments) is a great way for new employees to learn and familiarize themselves with the workforce.

This information compared to the comparative study found that in relation to turnover rates, the two lower brackets of 0-5% and 6-10% of turnover rates and higher percentage of programs allowing tours and introductions.

A response from Company ABC's employee states:

“...training programs aren't there just for show. There is a use for them. Training programs assists the new employee to give them a step in the right direction with the company. It allows them to understand the goals and missions, to learn company history and policies, to facilitate and motivate to ultimately improve their performance.”

In comparison to the comparative study, cross tabulation by using the Pearson Chi-Square showed that 'improve performance' was to be most significant. The companies with 0-5% of employee turnover stated that improving performance was answered most frequently.

Another response by an employee at Company ABC when asked about the means of training responded: “There isn't a one-size-fits-all mentality here because, lets face it – it doesn't always work. By using a variety of ways to train can produce some of the best results.”

Comparing that response to the comparative study, the most frequent answer was on-the-job training at 82.7%. Train the trainer was a 48.5%, PowerPoint was at 75.9%, lecture was at 70% and mentoring was at 55.3%.

From first hand experience, Company ABC does on-site and off-site training whether it is formal or informal training sessions. There is no significant preference in either of the types of training sessions.

Compared to the comparative study, the participants (able to choose more than one) opted for an on-site location at 98.3%, 40.5 % choose off-site, and 38.8% would like on-line training. After performing a cross tabulation, no significance was found.

At Company ABC, the formal training sessions tend to be monthly and the informal training sessions can be weekly/bi-weekly. It is up to the new employee and the assigned mentor to determine the frequency of the sessions. There are other types of training sessions that are only yearly (such as CPR and First-Aid Training) but offered twice a year to make sure all employees are within their certification. One interviewee states: “We want our employees to be equipped with all necessities of the job and more. I believe our training programs are essential to our operations but the scheduling of the sessions is where we hit it home. Each employee and their mentor are responsible for their own training scheduling. If they are behind it will show in their one-on-one evaluation and where they’ll need to improve.”

Interview Questions Analysis

The researcher reviewed and categorized the interview answers to the eight questions. Question 1 resulted in a similar feeling from each interviewee in regards to the current orientation and training program. In the past to the current program, the company has seen significant increases in the interest of new and veteran employees. “It’s a way to get connected to the entire business and the people in it,” says one interviewee. The

senses are the current program is much more effective, but still needs some improvements.

Question number two, again, is very consistent across the board of interviewees. The interviewees stated, in general, that the best way to keep employees at the company is to invest in them from the very start. There is a connection or a bond that says, ‘...hey, you did this for me, I’ll give you my all in return...’ stated one interviewee. Another consensus is to look at previous year’s turnover rate to the current turnover rate. One interviewee said: “...then look at the turnover rate and training programs at other businesses in the same industry and compare that to what Company ABC is at; then you’ll have your answer. There is a link, no matter how small or large, between training and turnover.”

Question three is regarding the current turnover rate and the reason it is at that number. The responses for this were not as consistent. Not everyone knew what the current turnover rate currently is at, but everyone knew it was an improvement from five years prior. Again, some of the responses varied. About 70% of the responses were regarding the orientation and training while the remaining 30% of the responses were about the culture of the company.

Question four discusses the topic of the type of training and how Company ABC embraces it. There was a significant consistency across the responses for this question. One interviewee stated:

There can’t be a XXL size or a one size fits all because too many times, people drown and can’t get out or it’s not enough and struggle to survive. That is why there is such a variety here at Company ABC. There is lecture,

train the trainer, PowerPoints, online training, group training, on-the-job-training, mentoring program, evaluations, and feedback sessions to help assist all employees.

Question number five is regarding where the improvements need to be. There is an inconsistency throughout the answers for this question. Some interviewees did not know where to start looking for improvements. Some responses stated that they did not care as long as it got done. The majority of the responses say it will take some time to identify where they need to improve.

In question number six, there was a consistency in the responses from the interviewees. To summarize, the orientation process is the same for each department. “We want to make sure everyone is familiar with everyone in the company because that is our internal network; teamwork is how we operate intradepartmental,” says one interviewee.

After the orientation processes, there are similarities in the training programs for each department but typically, Department A stays within its department, same for Department B, and so on. Department A is not mentoring or on the same job responsibilities as Department B so the training is going to be a little different. However, there are times where each department will cross paths, such as in the formal training classes in which all departments participate.

Question number seven had some differences in the responses from the interviewees in regards to receiving feedback and how seriously it is taken once received. One interviewee goes as far to say:

...I've been here for many years and have great feedback from employees; whether it's certain things that are efficient and effective, or things to improve. But the only way things get changed is if upper management buys into it; sometimes if they do, they'll claim it as their own idea versus crediting employees that came up with the idea.

Other interviewees have a consensus that feedback is taken very seriously and employees are urged to make their suggestions known; whether it is during a one-on-one evaluation or in a department meeting. "We've had some of the best solutions come from employees so we definitely take their information seriously," says another interviewee.

Question eight is regarding what an employee experiences once they get hired. Eighty percent of the responses were consistent while 20% of the responses had variation. The majority knew what newly hired employees would undergo; however, the remaining said: "they are hired; they do paperwork, do scavenger hunts, orientation, assign a mentor, shadow for a bit, follow the formal classes, and go to work."

The majority of the responses were more detailed as to what employees will undergo. They had an understanding of the process and how it affects the new employee; very different from the cut-to-the-point response from other interviewees.

Chapter V: Discussion

This study is focusing on the first months of a new employee in an organization and how orientation programs and training programs can help retain that person while increasing productivity, lower turnover rates, and increase return on investment. For this study, Company ABC was used as well as a comparative study previously done that provided tremendous similarities.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate Company ABC's training program concentrating on the first nine months of training and determine how it has impacted employees' career in their position. It is also to educate the top levels of management on how important training is and to pinpoint a list of best practices to use. This information will be presented to the company for their own evaluation.

Literature was researched involving orientation programs and the steps to create an effective program, training programs for career development, career knowledge, skill, and ability to keep employees at their current employer, employee retention rates were calculated and lowered if orientations and proper training is provided, employee socialization to feel valued and in-sync with the company and its' goals, return on investments and productivity.

Successful managers are able to monitor and track the department's effectiveness and evaluate programs to make any adjustments or changes to make them more effective. If a company is ready to implement this department, more in-depth research is needed to fully gain insight on how to do it successfully.

With developing and implementing a department specific for training and developing employees that will in turn develop and implement an orientation/on-boarding

program will allow the company to ensure more of a successful and solid workforce and lower turnover rates. In addition, this allows the new employees a level of comfort with the current employees. The work environment all around is more inviting and will positively affect the productivity of the employees. There needs to be a strong support from upper management during the process of developing, designing, and implementing these functions. It will take a lot of time and effort in everyone of the company to ensure the success of the change. Training is not just a one time meeting/session; it is an on-going process that cannot be ignored or frantically thrown together. Training needs to be effective; otherwise it is a waste of time and money of the company. In conclusion by utilizing these two very effective ideas will impact the return on investment and overall culture of the organization.

There is a lot of information on how a company can be more involved in decreasing turnover and increase their employee retention. The organization plays a large role by starting to recruit and select employees with potential; however, there is even more responsibility of the company to continue teaching their newly hired employee to be able to work to their potential. If an organization sees a trend of employees leaving and are unable to pinpoint why, that is the first step to take; they need to analyze where the turnover is coming from. Identify where the actual source of the problem lies; is it the manager, the training, co-worker, or a combination of things? After that is identified, the company needs to develop a plan and gain support from upper management as to what needs to happen to reduce the problem. Find different approaches that work for the company and the employees. Ask current employees for input; they are the best resource since they are on the front line of the organization.

To work more proactively to track employee turnover and the reasons why, a growing large trend is implementing an exit survey to employees who decide to leave. An article in Education (2006) journal that focused on a teacher-education setting about exit surveys states: "...provides insight into teachers' instructional practices, their attitudes toward these practices, and their preparation to use differentiated instruction." Compare that to the business setting. An exit survey will provide insight for managers and human resources to determine how the employees felt about practices and training, or whatever the survey has as questions that will help determine why they are leaving. This is a great tool for managers and trainers to use in order to reevaluate their training program or the way they manage/train.

Conclusion and Recommendations about Company ABC

As new employees enter Company ABC there are certain steps to be done before they can start working. There is a board of pictures of each employee with their name and the department they work in to help familiarize them with who works where and feel comfortable going up to someone with questions. The on-boarding or orientation program is very detailed. There is a formal and informal orientation program conducted. The formal program is a classroom style setting to learn about the company in detail; the values, beliefs, and culture. There is a sense of pride and ownership to continue in the same direction when employees come on-board with Company ABC. Literature is given out on the company for employees to read and ask questions. At orientation, employees are assigned a mentor; a go-to-person who will be there for questions, motivation, training sessions, or just to have lunch. Once assigned a mentor, they develop a schedule to meet and go over the literature given (on the company itself or training session).

There is also an informal orientation program where all new employees with their mentors, upper management, and a few current employees go to a location and have a timed scavenger hunt. It is a way to break the ice, meet new people from different departments and show a spirit of camaraderie.

To begin, the new employees train with their mentor or whoever their mentor assigns for that day/week. After some time (no specific time given) the mentor along with the general manager will evaluate the employees on their progress to see if they are able to perform on their own. If they are, they are assigned their job; if they are not, they continue with their mentor and hone in on where they need assistance.

There is a certain schedule of classes that all employees need to complete that are offered two times per month. It is up to the employees to sign up for the class, attend, and get their certificate of completion to move on to the next session.

Company ABC has such a passion for training their employees; their turnover rate is low for their industry. They have a continuous training program of all employees; new and veterans. People enjoy working for the company and they look forward coming to work everyday; it is like a second family.

Company ABC has their strengths and weaknesses. One of their strengths is admitting where they are weak and are willing to work on them to get them into the strength category. As a former employee, Company ABC strives for excellence, find best practices, benchmark new ideas, and feel employees are their best assets. There was no fear to talk to upper management and offer new ideas to make something better; there was a sense of teamwork horizontally and vertically in the organizational chart. That is not found in all companies.

Company ABC, as mentioned, has their weaknesses as well. Some mentors should not be mentors and upper management needs to find a way to identify those to correct it. One bad mentor can spoil the whole system. The main weakness is finding a collaborative balance between two main departments. If the two vice presidents do not get along, the effect on the employees under them will be the same. The idea of the two departments working as a whole unit was more wishful thinking than reality but did not want to face it. Unfortunately, that has nothing to do with training. That is a culture problem. That aside, the training at Company ABC is 'top-notch,' one that is incredibly effective.

Recommendations to Company ABC are to develop a new way for mentor assignments; identify a list of best practices and ensure each department adheres to them. Communication is key between all departments involved; as well as the top level of management be in agreement with all training needs.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

- 1) What are your thoughts on the current orientation and training program?
- 2) Do you think orientation and training directly affect the turnover rate? How so?
- 3) What is the turnover rate and why do you think it's at that number?
- 4) What is the best format on which to train? How has Company ABC embraced that?
- 5) Where do you see a need for improvement in the current training programs?
- 6) Is the orientation and training programs the same for each department? Why?
- 7) How do you receive feedback on the training/how do you evaluate? How seriously is it taken into consideration for any changes?
- 8) Describe what a new employee experiences when they are hired?