
EFFECTIVE TRAINING

Prepared for the Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development

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EFFECTIVE TRAINING

1. WHY IS TRAINING IMPORTANT?

An essential component of any food safety program is the training of employees; both in food safety or HACCP systems, as well as task related training on new procedures and keeping proper records. In a HACCP system, the understanding of the importance of training is shown in its designation as one of the prerequisite programs.

Training is required as employees enter the workforce of a particular company, as well as refresher training to be conducted at least annually. Training can demand a significant investment on the part of any company and it is imperative that the training be effective. Measurement of the effectiveness of any training program is often subjective, relying solely on the instructor's ability to deliver a certain curriculum. In order to make the training less subjective, tools can be applied to assess employee comprehension and their ability to deliver the required outcomes.

In the food industry, many employees face issues with language and literacy. As such, training materials and testing methods should attempt to reduce the English content so they can be easily understood. While training materials are available in a number of languages, an ESL-based approach using demonstrations, hands-on "games", and pictorial materials are often very effective in training workers who may not be strong in English.

Training is important because employees may not have the all the necessary knowledge and skills to do their jobs correctly and according to company procedures. Every workplace is different and there may be differences in the way we do something compared to our competitors. Even considering that some people do not stay in a job long, we need to train them.

Training provides staff the opportunity to learn how to do what is expected and required of them in their jobs. It prepares them to do their jobs correctly and safely. Training can help resolve problems and correct poor behaviours. It can help employees understand the importance of what they do. It also helps empower them to act in certain situations, by providing them with the knowledge and skills to be competent in their jobs.

There are many types of training that can be provided to employees. They include on-the-job-training using the buddy system and more formal classroom training. Regardless of how you choose to train, it is essential that the training be effective and the learners achieve the learning goals as set out in the learning objectives and the lesson plan.

2. TRAINERS

A good trainer is essential to the learning process and should be selected carefully. Not all persons are meant to be trainers. Trainers can be in-house or outsourced. You may wish to use an outsourced trainer if your company is small and you do not have the necessary personnel. In house trainers however are used in the buddy stems for training on-the-job.

The characteristics of a good trainer include the following attributes:

- Exhibit competency in the subject area
The trainer should be an expert in the subject matter. Ideally, he/she should be able to speak from personal experience and use those experiences to provide examples to the learners.
- Understand how learning occurs and the different learning styles
- Show enthusiasm about subject
Enthusiasm will be transferred to the learners, if the trainer is excited about the subject materials and is eager to share. It will also make the material come alive for the learners.
- Be able to demonstrate or teach in a sympathetic manner
The trainer should be able to speak at the learner's level, without talking down to the learner. Being open minded and welcoming questions, discussions and opposing points of view are essential skills.
- Be flexible and able to adapt material to target populations
Trainers should understand who their learners are and use appropriate examples that have relevance to their learners. They should also be able to link the training to organizational goals. They should be able to present materials in different ways and have alternate activities in case the planned activities do not meet the learning goals.
- Be able to listen effectively, summarize, paraphrase, use effective questioning
Listening is a key attribute. Trainers should be able to understand that not all people learn in the same manner and different approaches may be needed. Summarizing and paraphrasing learners' comments is an excellent method to show learners that they have been heard and their contributions appreciated.
- Be prepared; know the materials and how to use the materials and resources that have been chosen. A trainer who does not have to use extensive notes while training is better able to connect with the learners.
- Have patience and a sense of humour. Humour promotes learning. Remember not all learners learn in the same manner. Different ways of presenting the same concepts may be needed to facilitate the learning.

3. COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Effective training is generally outcome-based. Outcome-based training is a learner-centered, results-orientated system founded on the belief that all individuals can learn. The desired outcome should be determined and then methods to create the desired outcome should be developed. Outcomes should be clear, observable demonstrations of learning that occurs after a significant set of learning experiences.

Outcomes should reflect:

- what the learner knows
- what they can actually do with what they know and
- provide motivation to carry out the work.

Outcomes should have clearly defined instructional content and concepts demonstrated through a well defined process beginning with a directive such as “explain”, “organize” or “produce”. These concepts should be captured in a lesson plan.

A lesson plan should be developed for each session. This will ensure that a variety of learning styles have been incorporated, that the time available is used effectively and built in measures of effectiveness of training are included. Lesson plans should include the following elements (a sample lesson plan is provided in Appendix A):

- Learning objectives –appropriately stated and sequenced in a logical manner desired; statement of knowledge, attitudes and skills
- Target audience – what is their specific level of competence, trainer must understand the current state of knowledge, attitudes and skills (by pre-test, observation, interviews, surveys)
- Course prerequisites- is the trainer building on other learning
- Key teaching principles - emphasize key points, stress safety factors, build on corrective actions/deficiencies already identified
- Teaching methodology - activities should be driven by content and learners
- Delivery timelines
- Location of training
- Evaluation -tests, observation, simulations/ role play, interviews, surveys
- Resources required -flipcharts, markers, overhead or LCD projector, videos

Learning is a four stage process involving preparation, presentation, practicing and proving.

1. Prepare (Introduction)

In the first step, you need to prepare the learner by setting them at ease, motivating them, clarifying the purpose of the training. This is a good time to emphasize their prior knowledge and expertise as well as define an acceptable level of performance. For example, let them know that at the end of the session they will need to

- demonstrate the skills learned by a practice exercise, test or a demonstration of skills mastered.
2. Present (Provide directions; give rules or guidelines)
Using appropriate training methods proceed in a logical manner to inform or present the new materials. Monitor the understanding at each stage through the use of questions.
 3. Practice (Engage in Activities)
Provide opportunities for learners to practise what they have learned employing activities in a non-threatening environment.
 4. Prove (assessment of learning)
Did the learners meet the objectives?

4. LEARNING OBJECTIVES - TRAINING GOALS

Several factors need to be considered when determining the training goals and objectives. The most important are the learners themselves - what is their knowledge base and skill level; how competent are they in the language; how well do they understand their job functions and the expectations.

Next, is to consider what the training should accomplish, i.e. what do the learners need to learn. These objectives can be identified in several manners. Orientation training needs to acquaint the new employee with company policies and practices as well as job expectations. Food safety refresher training to be conducted at least annual may be a regulatory requirement. Observing employee practices may identify training needs. Customer complaints and auditor observations are often a source for determining refresher training on specific topics.

A handy tool is a training matrix. It can identify training taken by each individual employee and serves as a useful record and reminder for when the next training session is required.

5. LEARNERS

It is important to identify your learners. The training style and language used and the activities need to be suited to your learners, as they will probably come from different educational and cultural backgrounds and have different knowledge and skills in each case. Trainers should try and capitalize on this by involving the learners in contributing their personal experiences as related to the topic of the training session. Adults learn when the topic is relevant to them and they understand why the training is important. They also like to practise: the learning should be followed by practical applications or practise sessions.

Learning styles

Adult learn in a variety of methods. Some learn by listening, some by reading, and some by doing. Trainers tend to train in the learning style that they are most comfortable with. However, it is important that your training session includes a variety of styles so that each participant has a variety of opportunities to learn.

Observers like to be shown and have visuals to look at. They are often quite silent in a group setting and do not appear to be participating, but they are learning. They prefer to watch and reflect and to learn before doing. PowerPoint presentations and handouts appeal to this group.

Doers like interactive demonstrations and exercises, where there is little listening but much activity. They like to be physically involved in the learning and to practise and experiment. They want to try to do use the knowledge and skills as it is being taught. They are often the most vocal and tend to be the most active participants.

Thinkers appreciate independent learning opportunities. They want to see the materials and learn on their own. They process information individually and think before they act.

Feelers benefit from the social learning involved in group activities. They like to form teams to solve a problem and want to experience what they are learning.

6. TEACHING TECHNIQUES

As mentioned earlier it is important to incorporate a variety of teaching styles within the training session. This enables all learners to be comfortable, no matter what their learning style. It also provides variety in the session. Activities also speed up the learning process as people learn better when they are enjoying themselves.

There are a number of teaching techniques and activities that can be utilized, depending on the material that is to be presented. In order to help the learners become involved, the first activity should be a “warm-up” to get the participants talking and involved. It can be a few simple questions about what they know about the topic to be discussed. If it is a new group, or a group that does not know each other or doesn’t know the trainer, it could take the form of self-introductions. This helps the trainer understand what the learners’ base of knowledge is.

Some of the key points to incorporate when training include:

- Indicate to learners what is important, the key points
- Change voice inflections
- Relate personal experiences to illustrate points

- Give lots of examples
- Use humour when appropriate
- Review what you have taught as repetition is essential for retention
- Make key points in several ways
- Ask check questions; ask for feedback through the session.

Much of the training may be in the form of a PowerPoint or presentation or a presentation using prepared overheads. The trainer presents the materials, providing examples and experiences to demonstrate the points. This is very passive learning and can get boring quickly. Games and brain teasers can also be used to break up the topics. Discussion and questions from the learners should be encouraged. Specific activities can be designed to illustrate particular important concepts.

Cognitive exercises involve the recall or recognition of knowledge, intellectual abilities and skills. The trainer presents the materials by lecture or demonstration and the learners demonstrate their understanding of the material by doing simulated role playing or case studies. In role playing exercises the learners take on a character and act according to set circumstances.

Affective exercises involve the changing of attitudes and the development of an appreciation of the value of an activity. This can be achieved by case study, discussion, simulation, or role play.

Psychomotor activities involve the development of manipulated skills involving tools, machinery, procedures and techniques. This is achieved through demonstration and practice.

Use of questions

The use of questions is a very powerful training tool. They can be used to stimulate discussion and generate interest in the learners. They can be used to check comprehension and learn about relevant experiences that the learners have had. However questions should never be trivial and should be planned ahead to achieve the desired results. Open-ended questions, rather than those that require a simple “yes” or “no” response are most effective as they involve the learner.

Different types of questions can be used throughout the training session. **Developmental questions** are used when the learners have some experience and knowledge. **Leading questions** attempt to lead the learners to a reasonable answer and guide their thought processes. They can be used to clarify the original question and give a hint or clue to the answer the trainer was looking for and can be used to build confidence in the learners. **Check questions** can ask the learners to apply what they have just learned to solve a problem. **Poll questions** involve a show of hands and are good energizers and add interest to the session.

Questioning should follow an “ask-pause-call-evaluate” sequence. This involves asking the group a question; pausing to let them think and then call for a volunteer to answer the question and then evaluate their answer. It is important to acknowledge all responses and find some merit in them each, if they are incorrect.

It is also important to ask the learners if they have questions throughout the session. Proper etiquette should be followed. Do not interrupt until they have completed their questions. Pay attention and make eye contact. Repeat the questions so all learners can hear. Use the phrase “*That is a good question. I am glad that you asked that...*” Once you have completed your response ask if you have answered the question. Give a brief answer to a question if you plan to cover it in more detail later. If you don’t know the answer, admit it and follow-up later.

Learners also appreciate being asked for their feedback. Feedback can provide excellent opportunities for improvement for the trainer.

7. TIME AVAILABLE FOR TRAINING

An important consideration is the time available for the training. Adults generally learn best in short segments. Effective training can be done in one hour sessions as long as there is a variety of activities as it is difficult to hold their attention for more than about 20 minutes at a stretch. If the topic is complex consider breaking it into several sessions rather than one long session.

8. LOCATION OF TRAINING

The training facility should be sized well for the number of learners, with sufficient space and chairs. Unnecessary noise and interruptions should be eliminated. The lighting should be adjusted so everyone can see the presentations and dimmed whenever possible. The temperature should be comfortable. Providing water, beverages or treats is always a bonus.

9. RESOURCES

Visual aids are always helpful, particularly when there is a lot of material to be presented. Some of the training aids that can be used include:

- **Flip charts** are useful in recording learner responses to questions and for group discussions. They provide a permanent record.

- **Chalk boards/white boards** can also be used to list key points or sketch diagrams.
- **PowerPoint presentations or overheads** allow you to present a lot of material at a time. They help focus the trainer on the key points.
- **Videos are** excellent to present concepts and real life situations. They add interest. It is useful to stop the video at key points for discussion. Be sure to preview the video prior to use, so you are not caught by surprise. If a point made in the video does not apply to your facility, be sure to point it out and discuss why they do not apply. Be sure to preview a video before use to ensure that it is appropriate.
- **Handouts** provide information that is detailed and is useful for learners to retain.
- **Supportive training pieces** such as payroll inserts and posters help reinforce the training and are circulated after the training has been completed.

10. EVALUATION OR ASSESSMENT

It is important to evaluate the learners to ensure that the training is effective and to assess the learner's competence. It also serves to increase the learner's self-awareness and potential for personal growth; increase the learner's self-confidence and commitment to learning; improve communications so staff can work more effectively together; help determine future direction and pace of learning and to award credentials.

There are several areas to consider in evaluating training programs:

1. learners' reaction to the training
2. information transfer (test ability to recall facts)
3. problem solving skills (apply to new situations)
4. psychomotor skills (observation or skill tests)
5. affective factors such as attitudes, values and feelings(demonstrate behaviours)
6. personal growth and development
7. changes in the organization

Methods of evaluation:

There are a variety of methods that can be used to measure the effectiveness of the training. Tests are often given before the training, during the training and immediately following the training.

It is useful to do a **pre-test**, before the training session starts or at the beginning of a training session to establish a baseline and determine the level of knowledge of the learners. Checking for comprehension **during the training** by means of questioning helps the trainer keep in touch with the learners and their grasp of the concepts and allows for

modification of the material during the training. Tests are often given **immediately following the training** so that learners can demonstrate the newly acquired knowledge and skills.

It is also important to do a follow-up assessment to check retention over time and the ability of the learners to apply the knowledge and skills in actual work situations.

Testing can taken different formats and is dependent on the knowledge and skills of the learners. When testing individuals whose first language is not English and their English reading and writing ability is low, pictorial evaluations are useful as the learners do not require a large vocabulary to demonstrate their knowledge. Open-ended questions are often useful in gauging learners' comprehension during the training. Self-graded tests are non-threatening. Remember to tell people what they do well, not just what they do wrong.

For those whose English is stronger, written tests with multiple choice, matching and true and false questions may be appropriate. Subjective written tests that involve essays or long answers are not particularly useful in training production employees.

11. ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

On the job training is a very specific type of training. It is defined as “planned job-specific training conducted at the work site by a supervisor or experienced fellow employee, using actual equipment, tools, and processes of a specific job”. It is often one-on-one training that employs a buddy system. The buddy will act as a coach or mentor to the new employee for a period of time, until the new employee is able to master the tasks and perform well on their own. For this reason, the selection of the “buddy” or peer trainer should include consideration of the attributes that makes a good trainer.

Often buddies are chosen because they do the job well, but they may not have good communication skills or even enjoy training others. They should also exhibit good attitudes and behaviours. They should:

- Be willing to share knowledge and expertise (a process expert)
- Have good relationship with managers
- Have good communication skills
- Have a positive attitude to their job and to supervision
- Be willing to help out wherever needed
- Be punctual, honest, pleasant and efficient
- Exhibit good attendance, appropriate dress and grooming and be willing to do their fair share

You do not want to teach the new employee bad habits.

In on-the-job training, a lesson plan may use documented work instructions. Be sure to document the information that needs to be provided; the skills that the employee is expected to be able to do and the proper behaviours and attitudes.

In preparing to train, the buddy trainers must clearly be able to communicate why things are done a specific way and be able to break down the tasks into a series of steps that can be easily understood and followed. They should understand the quality standards and safety issues.

The tell-show-do cycle works well, as it uses all the learning style preferences.

1. Tell them what you want them to do.

Provide an overview, and explain the importance of the task. Tell what you will show them, mention quality control, food safety factors. Point out safety issues. Tell them you will demonstrate and then let them try it themselves. Ask them to tell you their previous experience.

2. Show them (demonstrate) how to do the task at least twice.

Demonstrate the steps carefully, in proper sequence, explaining the quality parameters. Do one small part of the process at a time, stress method and quality and then speed. Stress the key points, using repetition. You can visually exaggerate key points using a training aid, written materials, or samples. Provide them with written work instructions so that they can refer to them as you train. Provide an opportunity for them to ask questions so that you know that they understand.

3. Allow them to do (try) it.

Immediately let them attempt the task. Be ready to correct mistakes, but allow the learner time to self correct (except when safety is an issue). Acknowledge what they did correctly, point out and correct mistakes but do not overwhelm the learner. Limit the factors you address at one time, Ask for and answer questions. Let them repeat the task. Observe carefully - are they doing the task correctly, in the proper sequence, and done safely?

4. Remember that it is important to follow-up once the person is able to do the task. Review process after some time.

12. SUMMARY

Training is an essential activity in any company. Significant resources are spent in ensuring employees are capable of doing the jobs they are assigned to. Effective training can save money by the elimination of re-training, minimizing the risk of marketing a hazardous product, reducing the occurrence of a recall and possible litigation.

Effective training requires excellent trainers that are subject specialists that are knowledgeable in that area that they are training. They should have good communication skills and be able to share knowledge in a positive manner.

Many factors contribute to effective training. Some of the most important include understand the goals and required outcomes of a training session, adequate preparation, use of effective resources and training techniques. Training also needs to be evaluated for its effectiveness and requirements for retraining need to be identified and addressed through a new training plan.

Tell me and I soon forget; show me and I may remember it; let me try and I will understand.

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Appendix A: Lesson plan example

1. Learners: *(Identify target learners)*
 - a. production workers
 - b. sales staff
 - c. retail clerks
 - d. office staff

2. Learning Objectives: *(use action words and specifics)*

At the end of this session, all learners will be **able to identify** the importance of personal hygiene and **describe** appropriate personal hygiene in their job, to reduce the potential for cross contamination including

 - a. proper attire
 - b. occasions requiring hand washing
 - c. when to notify a supervisor of illnesses
 - d. proper use of gloves
 - e. demonstrate proper hand washing techniques

3. Key Teaching Principles: *(what topics will be covered)*
 - a. Introduce the importance of hygiene
 - b. Review concepts of contamination (need hazard lesson as prerequisite)
 - c. Proper Attire and behaviours
 - d. Illness and injury
 - e. Hand washing procedures and when to wash hands/gloves

4. Teaching Techniques *(how will you present the information)*
 - a. PowerPoint presentation
 - b. Example of poorly dressed employee
 - c. Hand washing demonstration using Glow-Germ
 - d. Questioning

5. Delivery timelines: 1 hour total

6. Location of training: *(where will the training be held)*

Company boardroom or classroom with tables or desks for writing

7. Assessment of Learning *(what type of testing will you use)*
 - a. Pretest
 - i. Trainer to enter wearing torn lab coat, large jewellery (watch, rings, necklace, earrings), fingernail polish that is chipped, hairnet not covering all hair, open toed shoes, cut but not bandaged finger, torn/dirty gloves, chewing gum or eating/drinking
 - b. Confirmation of learning:
 - i. Hand washing exercise with Glow-germ
 - ii. Pictorial test of employees dressed inappropriately

8. Resources to be used:
 - a. Glow Germ kits
 - b. Hand washing video or demonstration

9. Supportive training pieces *(what follow-up will you use)*
 - a. Payroll inserts and plant signage