Productivity methodologies, tools, and techniques

Gearing up employees for corporate competitiveness through structured on-the-job training—Kelvin Chan

Skills, among other factors like innovation and service, have been identified as an important factor in helping companies to create value in the new economy. Although companies are aware of the benefits of training, surveys have revealed that generally many companies were unable to send their employees to attend courses owing to:

- A shortage of manpower and busy work schedule
- Employee reluctance to attend training during nonworking hours
- Work standards taught in courses are not exactly relevant to the companies' practices
- No training providers are available for the specific skills required

The obvious solution is on-the-job training (OJT), and many companies have some form of OJT. Some companies have unpleasant experiences as their unstructured OJT programs are difficult to monitor and not effective in developing the required skills among employees. The problem is not the technique itself, but the process of execution of OJT. A well-structured OJT program will resolve implementation issues as specific job knowledge and skills are identified and documented to guide trainers during training. Employees will be motivated to learn as the training is directly related to their jobs in their actual work environment. At the same time, the trainer can observe, correct, and reinforce skills to point out any errors before they become poor work habits.

The Structured OJT technique was introduced in Singapore sometime in 1990 and has since gained popularity among companies. In a factory that manufactures electronic products, it was reported that the implementation of Structured OJT resulted in an 11% increase in production output and a 28% decrease in rejects. In another company that operates a chain of fast-food restaurants, Structured OJT had led to improvements in job performance of its employees, as shown by a 25% decline in customer complaints and a 50% reduction in staff turnover. Structured OJT can also help in reducing training costs by as much as 75% as employees need not be released from their jobs during training.

There are three stages in the implementation of Structured OJT.

Stage 1: Planning
This stage involves the identification of jobs for OJT, and thereafter task analysis, as outlined in Figure 1, is conducted to develop the OJT blueprint. The OJT blueprint is then reviewed, tested, and finalized.

Stage 2: Implementation
The training needs of each trainee are identified and the required training is scheduled. The trainer, who is usually the immediate supervisor, will then prepare for coaching based on the schedule and OJT blueprint. Coaching the trainee is done in four structured steps, as shown in Figure 2. The training contents can be tailored to suit the existing skill level of each employee as the coaching process is done on a one-to-one basis.

Stage 3: Evaluation
This stage involves the evaluation of the performance of the trainee after training, and additional training hours may be added if the skills of the trainee in a particular task are found to be unsatisfactory. This step will also help to review the effectiveness of the OJT blueprint for continuous improvement.

When effectively developed, Structured OJT will become a useful training technique for employee skill development and to supplement off-the-job training programs.

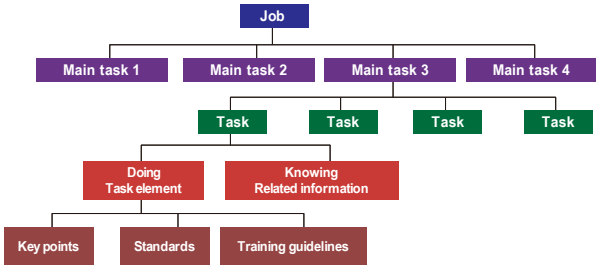
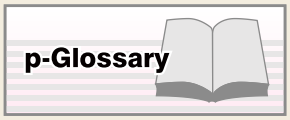


Figure 1. Breaking down the components of a job during task analysis.
Source: Teian Consulting International, Singapore.

Figure 2. The four-step structured coaching process.
Source: Teian Consulting International, Singapore.

Contributed by Director and Principal Consultant Kelvin Chan, Teian Consulting International Pet Ltd, Singapore, resource speaker for the APO training course on the Development of Productivity Practitioners: Basic Program.



To provide easy reference to productivity-related terms including methodologies, tools, and techniques, the APO developed the p-Glossary, available on its Web site (www.apo-tokyo.org).