

Training Audit

A Systematic Monitoring of Both Output and Progress of Training Activities

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Abstract

Training has greater significance for the success of modern organisations. Core competencies and expertise give the organisations an edge over their competitors and training plays a vital role in developing and strengthening these competencies. Change of technology demands that employees update their knowledge, skills, abilities and technical expertise. Jobs are becoming more interdependent demanding high interpersonal and problem-solving skills, which can be acquired only through training. Training facilitates meeting the ever changing and challenging competitive environment in which the organisations have to function. So, training audit becomes useful. Audit of training is a systematic monitoring of both output and progress of training in order to determine whether they comply with planned objectives and the plan is implemented effectively to agreed standards. Setting standards, auditing, networking of trainers are the quality improvement systems in training.

Key words: *Employee Training, Human Resource Management, Quality Improvement, Training Audit, Training Auditor.*

Introduction

Organizations and individuals should develop and progress simultaneously for their survival and attainment of mutual goals. So, every modern management has to develop the organization through human resource development. Employee training is the important sub system of human resource management. Employee training is a specialized function and is one of the fundamental operative functions for human resources management.

After an employee is selected, placed and introduced he or she must be provided with training doing facilities. Training is the act of increasing the knowledge and skill of an employee for doing a term particular job. **Dale S. Beach** defines the term training as the organized procedure by which a people learn knowledge and skill for a definite purpose.

However, in the past the training activities have been more ritualistic due to absence of a strategic link between training and human resources development. Today, the training function is made an effective organizational intervention, and it is important that by establishing a clear policy of training and development within the framework of total human resource development. The training establishments need to be actively involved in the total training process starting from the identification of the training needs, evaluation of training effectiveness and the benefits of training to the end users viz. the internal and external customers. The need for training and development is determined by the employees' performance deficiency, computed as follows:

Training and Development Need $\frac{\text{Standard Performance} - \text{Actual Performance}}{\text{Standard Performance}}$

Training Audit

Training audit like any other audit is a diagnostic tool and not a prescriptive instrument. It helps us to identify what is missing or what needs improvement, but it does not tell us the course of action which needs to be taken.

Training audit becomes useful when an organisation is ready to act on the findings of the audit and is ready to evolve its human resource function to a level where it can support the organisation to achieve its full potential.

Training audit can be a part of a larger audit covered by the HR audit, which deals with every aspect of the HR function like HRIS, recruitment, documentation, compensation and benefits performance management, termination and transmission and legal issues.

The training audit is an independent review of selected training activities within your company. The scope of the training audit can range from a focused review of course development procedures, instructional techniques or OJT training activities to a thorough investigation of all of the separate training activities with an organisation. The audit may involve

- Technical training
- OJT training and management
- Sales, management, quality and other training activities
- New hire training and supervisory training
- Manufacturing training

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Objectives of Training Audit

The objectives of training audit are as follows:

- I. Establishment of standards for each training activity.
- II. Regular assessment of actual training process against the standards.

Functions of Training Audit

Training audit serves the following functions

- The training audit can be used to assess the health of the training activities.
- It is performed to assess the degree to which the training needs of the company are met and to draw specific action plan for improvement.
- The training audit may serve as a catalyst for review and discussion among the trainers while evaluating their activities.
- The audit may also serve the function of blueprint for management action.

Criteria for Setting Standards for Training Audit

A documented training standard is used for auditing each training activity. The following criteria will be incorporated in the training standard:

- I. The validity and relevance of training needs
- II. The method for identifying the trainees
- III. Training design
- IV. Design of assessment
- V. Infrastructure facilities, availability and preparedness
- VI. Level of preparedness of the faculty
- VII. Implementation of training
- VIII. Measurement of output
- IX. Work place reinforcement
- X. Monitoring and control

The foregoing standards need not be the lowest factor, but the highest factor which can be achieved for training and organisational effectiveness.

Levels of the Training Audit

There are three levels of training audit:

- I. Programme level,
- II. Department level and
- III. Organisation level.

The process of auditing the training system involves a detailed examination of a particular training programme to see if every stage of its design, implementation and validation has been carried out properly.

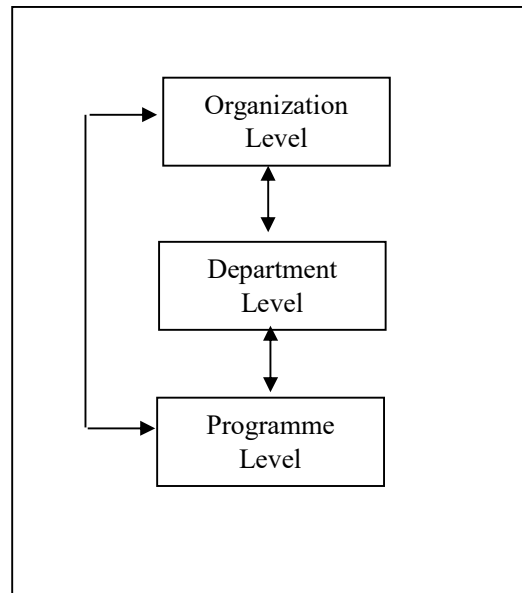


Fig. 1: Level of the Training Audit

The department audit assesses the professional competence of the training function to transfer the learning effectively. The prime focus of the audit at this level is on how the training function manages the people, systems and routines associated with the training.

Besides being efficient the training function should be effective and contributing to the organisation's overall objectives, plans and strategies. Top management involvement is required in setting the training agenda and assessing and managing the performance and contribution of training function. Towards this training function should not be a closed system, away from internal and external environment. On the contrary the training function should be responsive to and influencing the organisation changes and demands through an open system. At the level of audit top management support, organisational objectives and plans and the reflection in the training plans, image the training function, contribution of training function, etc. are covered.

Benefits of Training Audit

The following benefits are reaped through training audit:

- a) Continuous improvement of effectiveness of training is ensured.
- b) The training function is linked well with the organisational objectives and the needs of the employees.
- c) As functional level audit inquires the level of preparedness of the faculty it paves the way for development of professional expertise.
- d) As audit requires documentation at every stage it facilitates preparation of procedure manuals and trainer manuals.
- e) Training audit not only benefits the training programme and function but shows the direction for the overall organisational effectiveness.

Steps in Training Audit

The process of auditing the training system involves a detailed examination of a training programme to see, if every stage of design, development, delivery, implementation, validation has been carried out properly. The training audit has seven steps.

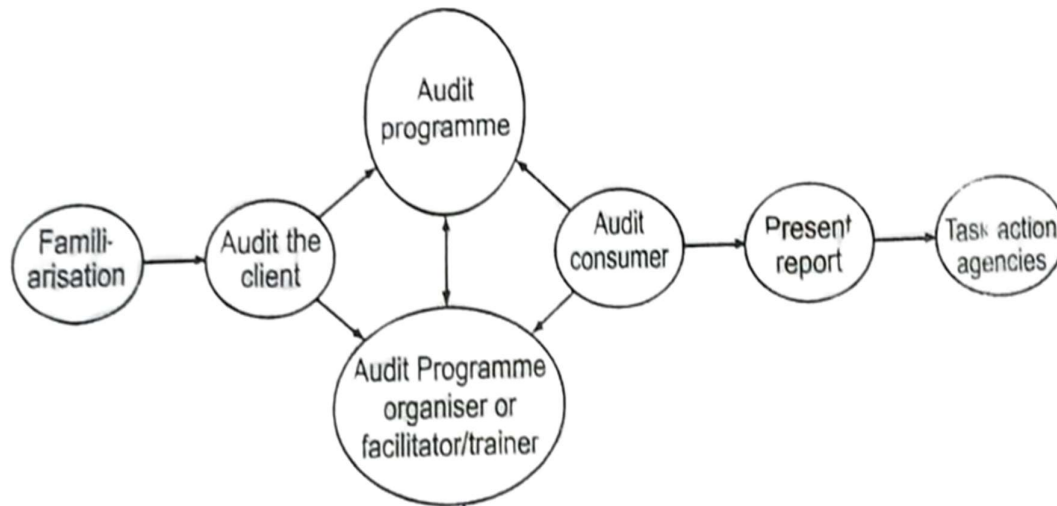


Figure 2: Training Audit Model

Source: Buckley, Roger and Caple, Jim (2009) The Theory and Practice of Training, Kogan Page Ltd., London, p.206.

Step One - Familiarisation

At this stage the training auditor tries to establish what are the aims and specific objectives of the programme, target population to which the training is to be given, demand for training and what changes or development in procedures have taken place over a period of

time. The sources of information for the above poser may be many and varied. The training auditor may scrutinise the training records/documents and examine the reports concerning the programme.

Step Two - Auditing the Client

The objective of the training audit is to confirm that lines of communication between trainers and clients exist, as it is only through effective communication the training can respond to change and achieve its objectives. The training outcome and its effectiveness can be assessed by monitoring the performance of the trainees and their reactions. Training audit serves the purpose of confirming that this process of monitoring exists. Posers like commencement of the programme, training needs assessment, changes in procedure, monitoring and feedback, constraints in meeting the training needs and external influences are covered in this step.

Step Three - Auditing the Programme

In this step the training audit examines areas like structure of training, the methods, media, tests and assessments which make-up the internal validation. During this step the auditor and the trainer need to review together the training programme exercises, tests training aids and questionnaires to see that they are appropriate and up-to-date. The auditor covers areas like training needs analysis, programme objectives, course structure, methods and media, training of 10 faculty, trainee details, Internal and external validation effectiveness, formal links between the operational staff and the training staff, constraints on training, etc.

Step Four - Auditing the Programme Organiser or Facilitator/Trainer

The training auditors have to bear in mind whether the trainer is having a pro-active stance or reactive stance. If a pro-active stance is adopted by the trainer, the trainer becomes crucial to the programme development and ensuring its relevance. The trainer will see it as his responsibility and strengthen lines of communication with the trainees and the consumers and through his dynamic approach positively influence the direction and quality of the training programme. The auditor would need to gauge the trainer's general impression of the programme's effectiveness, the reaction of the consumer and the degree of satisfaction felt by the trainer and the trainees.

Step Five - Auditing the Consumer

The audit must take into consideration, the consumers namely the trainees of the programme and their line managers. The audit must confirm that external validations have been carried out and both trainees and the line managers had opportunity to contribute to their fullest extent.

Step Six-Presenting the Report

Considerable amount of data observations and comments would have been collected by the auditor during the course of the audit. The style, method and reporting conventions, depends on the organisational requirements. Before reporting the auditor should evaluate the findings, clarify areas of ambiguity before drawing conclusion, etc. The report of the auditor should be readable, understandable, usable, bereft of technical jargon, simple and comprehensive.

Step Seven - Taking Action Agencies

It is expected that action will be taken on the audit conclusion and recommendations by initiating plan of action and reactive or pro-active task. This may include investigation or research of specific areas of operational unit heads, HR specialist, training specialist, etc.

Qualities of Training Auditor

Though the training auditors require many qualities, the following are considered significant:

- The training auditor should be well versed in training technology.
- He should possess skills in designing data collection instruments, problem-diagnosis, root cause analysis, appraising training methods and techniques and report writing.
- The auditor should have sound interpersonal skills in areas like interviewing, counselling, giving and receiving feedback, etc.
- The auditor should be familiar with the organisation in general and the training function in particular.
- The auditor should be capable of taking different roles like helper, inspector, expert, motivator or consultant, depending on demands of the situation. While playing the above roles the auditor should consider organisational climate, future organisational changes, maturity of the training personnel, pro-active/reactive training initiative, etc.

- The audit function is a demanding task and the auditor should have enough maturity to report the findings in such a way that it facilitates not only the programme effectiveness but also results in overall organisational effectiveness.

Sometimes the training manager himself may step into the role of training auditor. Then the training manager/auditor has to be careful that the audit function remains distinctly separate and does not get lost within his general managerial role.

Conclusion

Training is a process of learning a sequence of programmed behaviour. It is an application of knowledge. It gives people an awareness of the rules and procedures to guide their behaviour. It attempts to improve their performance on the current job or prepare them for an intended job. It covers not only those which bring about growth of the personality, it also helps individuals in the progress towards maturity and actualization of their potential capacities. In organizational terms, it is intended to equip persons for earning promotion and holding greater responsibility. Training a person for a bigger and higher job is development.

Sultana et al. (2012) in their study stated the value of R^2 as 501 that signifies that the employee performance varies by 50.1% through training programs. This study argues and provides evidence that training is an important practice considered under talent management which enhances the employee performance.

Training is important for employees because it signifies its effect on productivity and performance of employee and organization as well. Training helps individuals and organizations to put the best position in this competitive phase today. This means that there is a significant difference between organizations which provides regular training to their employees and those organizations that do not train their employees (**Huselid et al., 2011**).

Training is also beneficial for both old-age employees and young workers as it helps in moral and mental health development of the employees to perform better (**Newton, 2006**). Those who want to generate value in the organization will understand the need for training because they require proper utilization of all resources. An organization that wants continuous progress or development of their employees must run these kinds of programs. This will help in polishing skills of employees at their workplace (**Shen and Darby, 2006**).

Finally, we may opine that the process of auditing the training system which involves a detailed examination of a particular training programme to see if every stage of its design,

implementation and validation has been carried out properly, is of vital importance and be carried out at the organisational level for better level of effectiveness.

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