

Designing Accountability-Based Trainings

By Mark Samuel

Skill-building training programs are developed by identifying the objectives and skills required to satisfy a need, which may come from a needs assessment. Then, the designer of the program will identify the tools and awareness activities that will assist the person in developing competence in using the skills. Finally, concepts and information are added to the materials to provide participants an opportunity to gain more cognitive information about the subject matter.

In Accountability-Based Training, however, a different approach is used, since the training is geared for accomplishing business results while learning skills. In addition, traditional exercises based on behavioral modeling, role-playing or case studies are not used, since all activities deal with actual work-related issues. Thus, the process of designing an Accountability-Based Training differs significantly from traditional approaches.

Below are nine steps to its design:

- 1. Identify Business Outcomes and the Real Issues Impacting the Business**
Outcomes. What will be accomplished by the end of the training program in terms of specific, measurable business results?
- 2. Develop a Macro-Operational System to Accomplish the Desired Outcomes.**
In other words, this is the general system or process that will realize the measurable results. Such a process has both a beginning and end, it can be easily tracked and measured, and it can be repeated for continuous and consistent results. This macro-operational system should also include a follow-up phase for tracking, modification and measurement.
- 3. Develop a Micro-Operational System for Each Phase of the Macro-Operational System.** This will address the specific workplace activities and actions necessary for completing the desired goals and outcomes of each phase of the macro-operational system.
- 4. Check the Macro- and Micro- Operational Systems for Practicality and Linkage.** Sometimes, we create elaborate systems and processes that simply can't work within the constraints of the organization's environment. How many times have you been to a program that taught a great technique or process, perhaps one that worked well on a case study and took a short time in class to resolve, only to find that you didn't have sufficient time to implement the technique back in the workplace? When this happens, we tend to blame the organization for its unreasonable conditions.

In contrast, the Accountability-Based approach accepts the organization's conditions as a state of reality. Systems are then developed to function within these constraints. Also, we must make sure that the different activities and processes of each phase of the system lead to one another appropriately, without duplication or holes in the process.

5. **Identify and Refine the Specific Skills, Techniques and Tools Used in the System.** Once we have the system in place, we can identify the appropriate skills necessary to implement it most effectively. In this case, various skills are integrated with one another, rather than remaining a fragmented set of techniques that leaves participants to figure out how they fit together on their own.
6. **Develop the Assignments and Activities so that Participants Will Identify and Resolve Real Issues from their Workplaces by Applying the Systems and Skills Taught.** This section makes the training experience a real-life working session, rather than just a skill-building session. The focus here is on implementation. Participants get the most value from this step, since they are solving real problems that needed solving anyway, giving them a high return on investment as well as confidence in knowing how it applies to their workplace.
7. **Design into the Program Awareness Activities that Help Prepare the Participants to Change their Mindset.** This is one of the best uses for awareness activities, allowing people to make their own discoveries rather than being told how to think. However, there's only so much awareness that one can digest before becoming overwhelmed. Therefore, we must ensure that each awareness makes a specific point that leads to the explanation of the system we are teaching.
8. **Add Supporting Information to the Materials.** This is used to augment the awareness activities and concepts that are discussed to teach people the system. We didn't learn to ride a bike by reading a manual or book; likewise, people don't typically learn a new system without using it. Nevertheless, it is important to give people supporting information, so that they may integrate it on their own as they implement their system and make adjustments to the process.
9. **Pilot the Accountability-Based Program to Check for True Practicality and Achievement of Business Outcomes.** All Accountability-Based programs must contain some type of follow-up, since measurement is such an integral part of the working session and process. Modifications to make the system more practical and user-friendly are designed into the program at this step in development.