COMPONENTS OF EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

By

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COMPONENTS OF EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN

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Title of Study: COMPONENTS OF EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN
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Major Field: TEACHING, LEARNING, AND LEADERSHIP

Abstract: This exploratory study was intended to identify which components of an
employee development program are currently being used, barriers companies face in
providing such a development program, and how a development program benefits
companies. A qualitative study was conducted by surveying human resource agents in
manufacturing industries within Northeast Oklahoma in order to identify the employee
development practices are currently being used, and what companies recognize as
barriers and benefits of their programs. The data suggested that these companies do not
have a complete understanding of what is required for a structured, progressive
improvement plan. The usage of suggested components of existing and future programs
included coaching, mentoring, formal and on-the-job training, apprenticeships, on-
boarding, performance reviews, career paths, and tuition assistance. Implications for
further study outside Northeast Oklahoma, including intensive interviews, were
determined to be beneficial for future studies.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Companies often ask, "Why should we take the time and money to provide employee development opportunities?" Imagine an aviation maintenance facility that has all the best tools and equipment, follows appropriate regulations, has the most current manuals, provides the best facilities for product development, and employs a full workforce. Now imagine these workers not being provided coaching, mentoring, or training on how to use the latest technology, tools, and equipment. Errors will occur, potentially costing thousands of dollars. Leach (2001) suggested that employees participating in on-the-job training have the ability to make decisions, move projects forward, and improve their own performance (p. 150). Structured employee development becomes a valuable aspect of the company's culture, because ultimately, any organization will be only as successful as its employees' skills (Buchanan, Hoy, and Vaught, 1985).

From ancient times to the Industrial Revolution to present day, employees have been a vital part of manufacturing processes (Sarfin, n.d.). Employers have noticed selecting and retaining employees are critical to maintaining a valuable market share, and in more recent years, employee performance has become a major concern for most human resource agencies. Figure 1 depicts the necessary balance organizational leadership must consider when working towards developing their workers.

Understanding what defines employee development along with how to properly implement such a program is important to companies. Fawcett and Myers (2001) asserted that,

"As competition intensity increases and the need for rapid, responsive and efficient production rises, manufacturers need to develop effective strategies that lever all a firm's resources into a competitive weapon." (abstract, p. 65). Mendes and Machado (2015) conducted a study and found that advancing employees' skills directly related to their improved performances (p. 4098). The need for highly skilled workers is constantly evolving, as manufacturing industries race to keep up with the latest tools and technologies. Gupta, Jaiswal, and Singh (2014) stated that, "Improvement and changes of individual employees is essential in the manufacturing companies where change is constant in all its functions." (p. 228). Laborers must continually learn new processes in order to ensure their companies can meet the demands of the market. Leach (2001) noted that when companies embrace workplace learning they foster growth with not only knowledge, but become better performers, decision makers, and overall better employees.

Figure 1: Why develop employees? Adapted from Buchanan, Hoy, and Vaught (1985).

Lack of employee development leads to unmotivated, disengaged, and poor performing workers. Often, "employees who are not engaged will affect the organizational performance through higher absenteeism, higher turnover, and lower productivity" (Basbous, Long, Muthuveloo, and Ping, 2013, p. 1546), leading to higher costs due to recruitment, on-boarding,

and training of new employees. So, why do more companies not focus on developing their employees to their fullest potential? Time and costs are predominant barriers, but failing to understand their workers' needs is also an issue.

Companies define employee development differently, basing definitions on their production needs, financial means, and time constraints. "Training has become the *drug of choice* as the means to fix individuals" (Chevalier, 2014, p. 8), but corporations must realize that there is more to developing employees than simply providing training courses. Figure 2 notes some possible components and eventual outcomes of a structured employee development program. This study is designed to identify and verify these components. It is known that some companies invest heavily in their workforce through various development practices, while others do little to nothing in terms of improving employee performance. Understanding the components of an employee development program is vital for worker retention, customer satisfaction, market sales, and overall company growth, if one is to allow the benefits to outweigh the barriers. Latif (2012) noted that company survival depends upon workers having the knowledge and skills to cope with future changes.
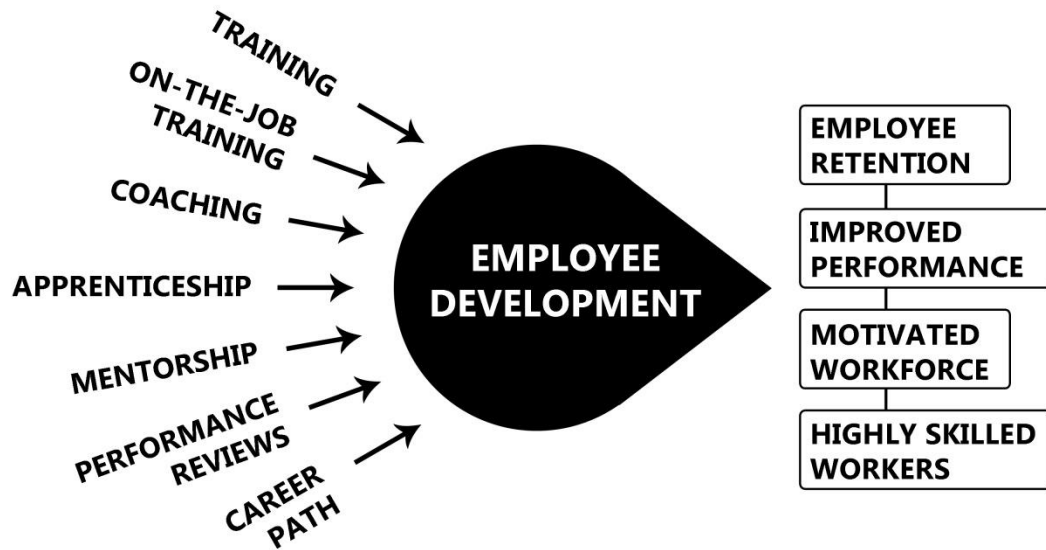
Figure 2: Potential aspects of an employee development program.

Statement of Problem

There is an industry need for structured employee development programs to use as a tool to identify components which will improve employee performance. Manufacturing companies need to be aware of existing barriers to maintaining employee development in their organization, and how to overcome these.

Purpose of Study

Manufacturing companies are faced with the ever-changing scope of technology, process, and equipment enhancements in their respective industries. In order to remain competitive in their markets, these companies must have highly skilled employees who are prepared to operate with the latest improvements provided by their company. Kristof-Brown, Johnson, & Zimmerman (2005) stated that, "consequences of withdrawing from work, performing poorly, or leaving the organization can be severe, making it likely that attitudes will be influenced by fit well before behaviors are changed" (p. 317). A structured employee development program must be established to handle these challenges, and ensure success of all workers.

There are barriers that companies must be aware of within their organization that inhibit developing employees. Currently, very few businesses have a fully developed program to improve their employees' performance. Many organizations do not know or understand what is needed to develop properly each individual employee. Furthermore, existing programs are not maintained or proven effective.

Every industry is different, but most employee development tools can be adapted to any kind of organization. This exploratory study was intended to identify which components of an employee development program are currently being used, barriers companies face in providing such a development program, and how a development program benefits companies. Additionally, the researcher reviewed recommended components based on previous studies and literature reviews.

Research Questions

The research questions were devised based on the researcher's experience implementing employee development programs and her discussions with human resource agents. Additionally, they were narrowed to focus on manufacturing industries, due to the issues these companies face when attempting to improve their production employees' performance, when employees may or may not have enough formal training to perform to the company's expectations.

The goal of these research questions was to identify what is being done in manufacturing to prepare employees to be highly skilled in their professions, and to unearth the struggles and benefits companies face when developing their workforce. These are the questions used in this study:

1. Which employee development components manufacturing industries in Northeast Oklahoma currently use?

2. What are the benefits to developing the workforce?

3. Which barriers exist when developing employees in manufacturing industries?

Definition of Key Terms

Barrier: A characteristic found to be blocking company from implementing, maintaining, or growing the employee development program.

Benefit: A positive result of a component of an employee development program.

Competency-Based Learning: The learning that occurs from defining a "broad set of competencies…and then training is developed that maps onto the most common needs" based on competencies (Meister & Willyerd, 2010, p. 158)

Context-Based Learning: "The learning that occurs on the job and during the everyday performance of work" (Meister & Willyerd, 2010, p. 158)

Employee Development: Encouraging employees to acquire new or advanced skills, knowledge, and viewpoints, by providing learning and training facilities, and avenues where such new ideas can be applied. (BusinessDictionary.com, 2015)

Formal Training: Intentional learning (Garavan, Gunnigle, McGuire, and Morley, 2002, p. 61)

Informal Training: Unplanned learning (Garavan, Gunnigle, McGuire, and Morley, 2002, p. 61)

Manufacturing Industry: An operation where product is fabricated from raw materials using machinery.

Production Employee: Worker who performs fabrication from raw materials using machinery.

SIC Code: Standard Industrial Classification Code

Support Employee: Worker who supports Production Employees in the capacity of such departments as human resources, training, finance, supply chain, and all other non-critical positions.

Limitations of the Study

The biggest limitation foreseen was access to responsive survey participants. Many of the companies in the population are corporate owned. Locating correct contact information for the Northeast Oklahoma location proved troublesome. Also, human resource managers are extremely busy, and could have difficulty finding time to complete the survey. This study was still reliable with fewer participants, as repeatability was expected.

Data collection occurred from human resource agents within many organizations, and may only include one person from each company. What these individuals define as employee development, existing barriers, and the benefits of a program may not be representative of the employees involved in their programs. Due to time constraints, the researcher recorded data only from human resource management, and relied heavily on their honest responses.

Assumptions of the Study

When obtaining the original population from the Tulsa County Library Research Wizard, it was assumed that all companies within the requested demographics were included. Depending

upon the categorization of these companies within the database, some companies may have been omitted. For the purposes of this study, it was believed to be sufficient initial data.

It was also assumed that survey participants would take adequate time to answer all of the questions to the best of their knowledge. Since this qualitative study was based on the survey responses, all answers were reviewed in the context of honest and open replies from the human resources agents.

Significance of the Study

Employees are the backbone of companies. Industry must constantly strive to improve its workforce, in order to remain competitive in its respective markets. The results of this study are beneficial for all manufacturing industries as a guide for structured employee development. It will become a tool for human resource departments when creating and maintaining their programs, thereby ultimately improving employee performance. Results of the study will also educate employers on how to ensure an adequate workplace learning culture, leading to improved performance from workers, and how to eliminate identified barriers.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to this research study. It includes the purpose and statement of the problem, along with the significance, limitations, and assumptions. The list of key definitions provides clarification and meaning for terms used in this study. Chapter 2, the literature review, is a review of the Operational Model, leadership theory, and Social Learning Ecosystem. These provide the theoretical framework which is the basis for the value of the study. This chapter also focuses on other studies that provide guidance to the components, barriers, and benefits of employee development. Chapter 3 is a discussion of the methodology used for the study. It details the population, sample, instruments and procedures followed, and each item correlates to the proposed research questions. The findings are identified in Chapter 4, and are based on the qualitative review of the instrument results. Finally, a discussion of the conclusions and future implications are shown in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

When employee development programs are designed, implemented and maintained, the company will see an increase in motivation, retention, performance, and skill levels of employees. "If a person does not have the requisite abilities to meet situational demands, overall and task performance are likely to suffer" (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005, p. 288), hence, "if individuals' needs are being met at work, resulting positive attitudes may mitigate strain, facilitate higher performance, and reduce turnover" (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005, p. 289). Understanding the theory behind the applied discipline of developing employees for improved performance will assist companies in creating a stronger market presence.

This theoretical framework intends to discuss existing research on employee interaction between jobs and companies, along with practical propositions of employee development plans. Creating a theoretical framework for applied disciplines has proven difficult in many younger fields. There must be a culmination of research and practice in order to create a strong framework. (Swanson, 2007).

It is not adequate to simply assimilate employees into a company and hope for the best "Instead, a multifaceted approach that involves the demands and supplies of jobs, coworker characteristics, and organizational elements is needed" (Kristof-Brown et al, 2005, p. 325). Illeris (2003) identified that company focus has switched to learning and competence development for

employees instead of education or teaching (p. 167). This transformation follows the 70:20:10 model which states that, "around 70 per cent of adult learning should occur on the job, with 20 per cent consisting of coaching and mentoring and about 10 per cent coming from formal classroom learning and reading." (Kreissl, 2015, p. 1). This concept must be applied to an employee development program in order to maximize performance results. The seventy percent portion of informal learning, being the largest, should be structured into various components for development of employees' skills. In a study conducted by Jacobs and Bu-Rahmah (2012), they found that structured on-the-job training was more beneficial to employees and produced better results for workplace learning. Most companies invest the majority of their funds and time on the ten percent area of formal learning while employees benefit further within the informal learning category (Meister & Willyerd, 2010, p. 157).

Operational Model

Buchanan et al. (1985) created an Operational Model for improving development programs from design to implementation to maintenance (p. 100). It "is constructed of five key elements: awareness, decision, implementation, evaluation, and support" (Buchanan et al, 1985, p. 100). The Operational Model is employee and leadership focused for optimal performance improvement based on the components of employee development programs.

Buchanan et al (1985) defined awareness as realizing the need for improvement which can come from human resources, leadership, and employees, but must have top management support. Figure 3 details the recommended process for the Awareness Stage. The need could stem from organizational changes, job skill requirements, and regulatory compliance. The current and desired performance levels must be identified prior to determining an employee development plan (Chevalier, 2014, p. 6). Leadership and personnel coordinators must understand that "an effort to align organizational goals with personal goals via development programs will increase the probability that the employee will practice what he or she learns" (Buchanan et al, 1985, p. 104). Often times, workers are left to locate and accomplish their own

training for certification purposes and, hence, do not obtain all of the necessary training required for their position. Beyond these regulatory and certification requirements, Cadman (2013) surmised that companies must provide adequate training and knowledge so that employees can perform their jobs successfully.
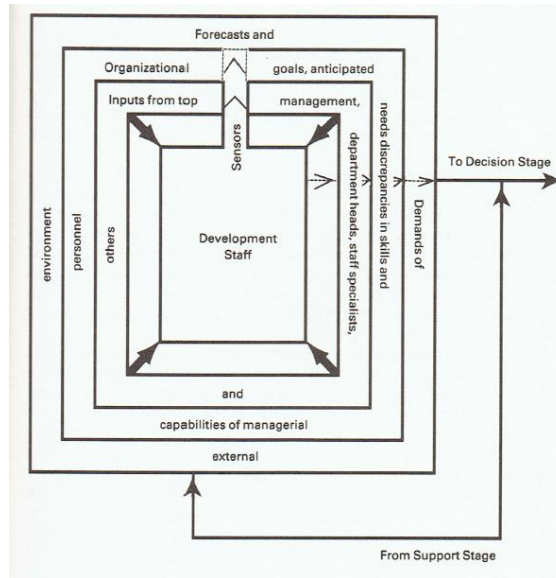
Figure 3: "Awareness Stage" (Buchanan et al., 1985, p. 119)

Creating an employee development program in which employees realize the value of workplace learning will ensure greater employee investment. Chevalier (2014) provided an updated Behavior Engineering Model, which offered factors for developing workers. These factors included environmental and individual components to address the needs of the organization and employees, such as: communicating necessary information, ensuring the availability of adequate resources, providing incentives, aligning employee motives with the work environment, ensuring worker capacity for learning, and educating workers with necessary knowledge for the job being done. Leach (2001) noticed that "the development of the total person can provide a greater benefit to organizations than previously thought" (p. 152). The awareness of developing employees to their fullest potential is an investment that will improve the organization as a whole.

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Hughey and Mussnug (1997) determined that training endeavors must be well planned and developed before implementation (p. 55). This is the basis for the second stage of the Operational Model (see Figure 4). Buchanan et al (1985) stated that, "The Decision Stage incorporates multiple levels: to initiate the program, to design and structure the program, to administer the program, to select participants, to evaluate, and to hold accountable" (p. 105). Mendes and Machado (2015) realized that, "a strategic approach in workforce enhancement may contribute to organisational success" (p. 4092). These strategic decisions must be made prior to creating or changing the employee development program.
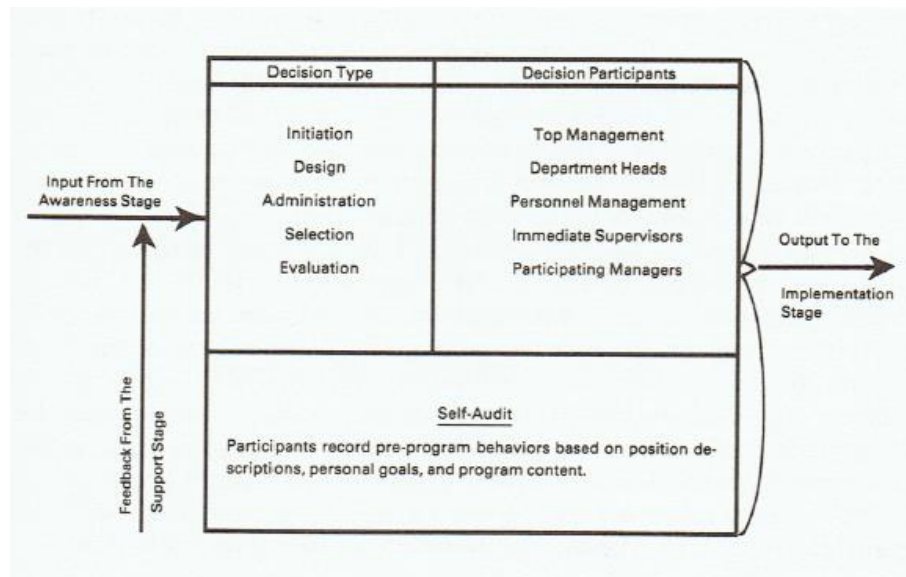
Figure 4: "Decision Stage" (Buchanan et al., 1985, p. 127)

Chevalier (2014) added that a systematic gap analysis should be done before implementing learning initiatives to determine the needs of the workers and organization, which should be aligned with the company goals. Identifying the necessary components and who will maintain the program are crucial for its success. Leadership must be highly involved in the decision process, as they will understand the needs and requirements of each position. They will also be the ones to hold employees accountable for program participation.

"The Implementation Stage comprises attendance by selected participants in an appropriately designed program administered in the depth and duration determined by the needs

and constraints of the organization" (Buchanan et al, 1985, p. 109). This stage can consist of multiple facets of development from informal to formal training as depicted in Figure 5. Garavan, Gunnigle, McGuire, and Morley (2002) defined formal training as intentional learning and informal training as unplanned learning (p. 61), both of which are valuable to the program being implemented.
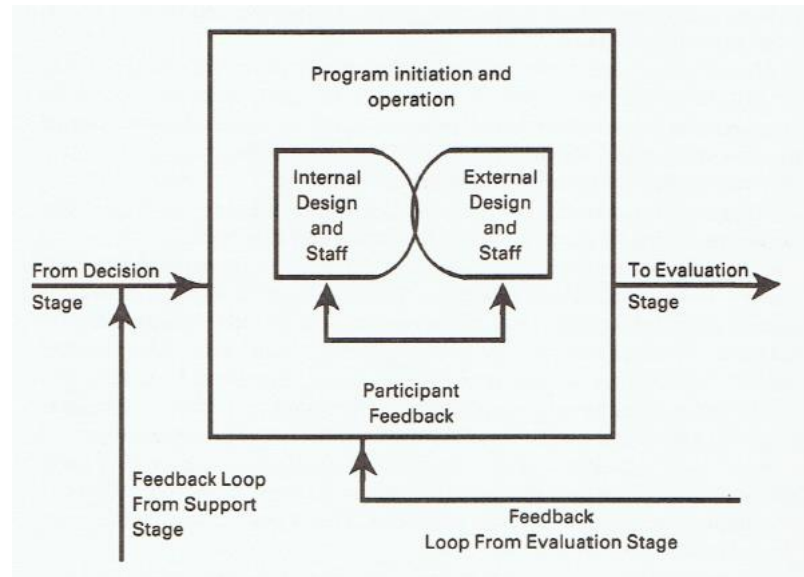
Figure 5: "Implementation Stage" (Buchanan et al., 1985, p. 138)

During the implementation, leadership must seek employee feedback to determine if changes should be made to the components of the program (Buchanan et al, 1985, p. 110). Buchanan et al (1985) noted that the Evaluation Stage "begins either during or immediately upon completion of the program" (p. 110). This coincides with the Implementation Stage and must be monitored for program effectiveness.

Hughey and Mussnug (1997) stated that, "knowing about a skill is not the same as being skillful" (p. 53). After a training session has been completed, evaluation and feedback must be reviewed for necessary revisions to enable effective learning. The Evaluation Stage has multiple purposes, such as determining the effectiveness of coursework, the use of newly obtained knowledge in the workplace, improved employee performance, and necessary adjustments to the

program (Buchanan et al, 1985, p. 110). Figure 6 details the evaluator, focus, and purpose of the

Evaluation Stage.
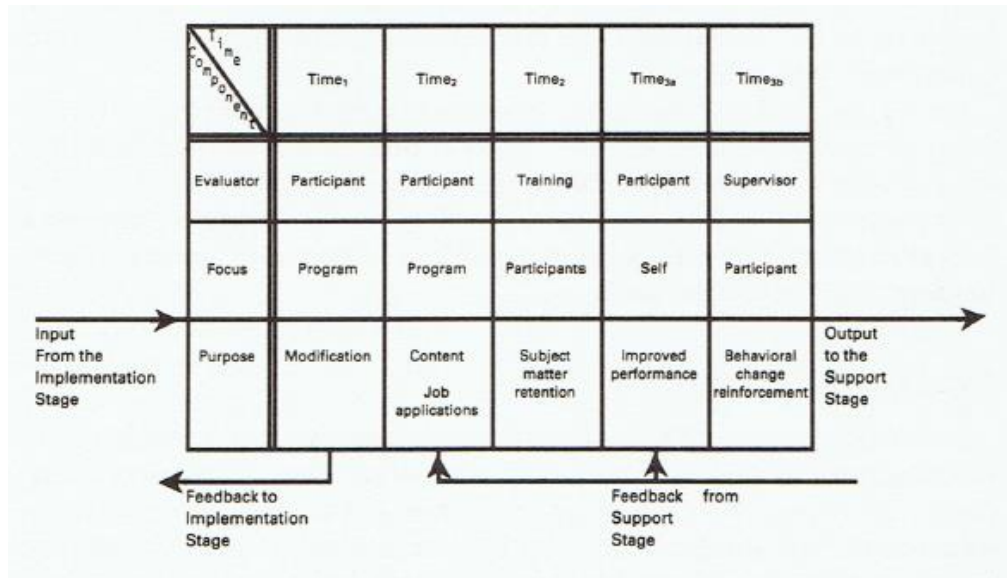
Figure 6: "Evaluation Stage" (Buchanan et al., 1985, p. 148)

Evaluation must take place continually to ensure longevity of the program and continued

performance improvement. Leach (2001) stated that "The effects of that training last for a while,

but without commitment, the trainees stop using the new skills" (p. 151). Chevalier (2014)

asserted that the work environment must support the workers' applications of newly obtained

knowledge on the job (p. 8). Leadership must also stay involved, and monitor the program usage

so that employees do not fall back into old performance.

The Support Stage ensures ongoing support of the employee development program by top

management, all levels of leadership, and employees. Buchanan et al (1985) suggested that this

stage includes "providing feedback to the preceding stages of the operational model" (p. 113).

Employee development is not a stagnant concept, but an ever-changing progression towards

continued performance improvement. "Naturally, the Support Stage feeds back to the Awareness

Stage, triggering an awareness on the part of personnel specialists or others in the organization

regarding the need for employee development" (Buchanan et al, 1985, p. 113) as shown in Figure

7. Jayakumar and Sulthan (2014) noted that training plans must be revised based on feedback

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from leadership and employees. Continuous improvement of the program is vital for keeping

employees engaged, and performing to the latest standards.

Staff involvement: top management, supervisory personnel, development staff

Input from Evaluation Stage

Intrinsic Rewards
Personal growth
Sense of achievement
New information learned

Extrinsic Rewards
Pay raises
Promotion
Job design
Recognition

Feedback to T_2 and T_{3a}

Feedback to first three stages
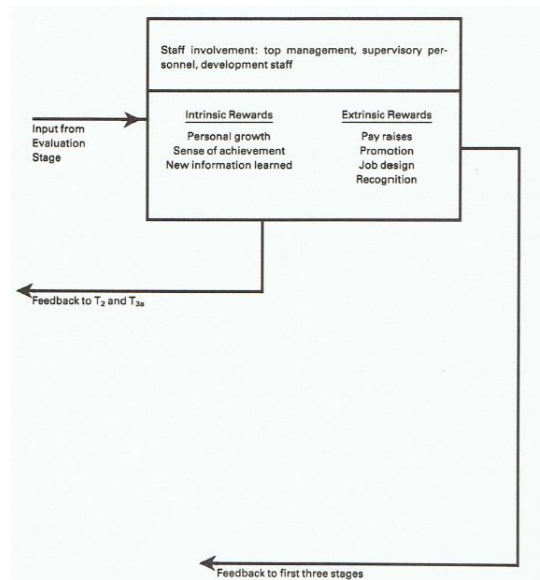
Figure 7: "Support Stage" (Buchanan et al., 1985, p. 148)

Buchanan et al (1985) suggested that "A development program should contribute long-run benefits both to the organization and to the individual managers" (p. 113). The benefits must be identified for program success. Previously, figures 3-7 show how the Operational Model encompasses continual feedback for program improvement. Garavan et al. (2002) stated that, "to harness employees' potential they must be given both the opportunity to enhance and measure their skills, and the organisation must create an environment that fosters learning, change and ongoing improvement" (p. 67). A strong program will clearly state the expectations of all employees including leadership, and what components are included.

Leadership Theory

It should be noted that leadership theory plays a part in this theoretical framework. Mendes and Machado (2015) found that managers must identify current and future skill requirements for their subordinates, in order to ensure continuous improvement (p. 4098). Also, appropriate leadership styles must be utilized in developing employees, as Garavan et al. (2002) noticed these managers are central to workers' learning and the need to understand workplace

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requirements for employee development (p. 61). Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) realized that,

"managers should pay attention to how clearly they are communicating work unit and

organizational values" (p. 326), as employees all learn differently at various times in their careers.

Situational leadership is imperative when working to improve employee performance.

Northouse (2016) asserted that, "different situations demand different kinds of leadership" (p.

93). Basbous, Long, Muthuveloo, and Ping (2013) defined three groups of employees: the

engaged employee, non-engaged employee, and actively disengaged employee. The engaged

employee is motivated to work, and learn on the job. The non-engaged employee is not excited

about his or her work, but will learn as required. The actively disengaged employee vocalizes his

or her unhappiness about the job, and is not willing to learn. Situational leadership tends to each

of these types of employees, and depending on the development level of the employee, a different

leadership style must be implemented.

Northouse (2016) concluded that, "situational approach is constructed around the idea

that followers move forward and backward along the developmental continuum, which represents

the relative competence and commitment of followers" (p. 97). Situational leadership defines

four leadership styles and four development levels. For the leadership styles, there are S1 or

directing, S2 or coaching, S3 or supporting, and S4 or delegating. The development levels

consist of D1 through D4, where D1 is low competence and high commitment, D2 is low to some

competence and low commitment, D3 is moderate to high competence and variable commitment,

and D4 is high competence and high commitment (Northouse, 2016, p. 95).

Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) noted that, "the dyadic relationships between individuals and

others in their work environments" (p. 287) has importance in how an employee assimilates and

grows in his or her organization. Each leadership style, in situational leadership, is aligned with

the development level in order to best develop workers. Supervisors must understand that

delegating to an employee who is a D1 will not be successful for either party, and instead will

result in frustration since the employee does not have the necessary level of competency.

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However, a leader who tries to direct a D4 employee will end up with the same level of frustration and animosity. Garavan et al. (2002) concluded that, "to build a learning organisation requires leaders who have the capacity to experiment, collaboratively evolve and develop personal mastery" (p. 67). Understanding that "pairing individuals up with similar others is advisable for enhancing fit assessments" (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005, p . 326), leading to a situational approach of improving employee performance.

The Social Learning Ecosystem

The Operational Model provides a structured approach to developing a program for employee performance improvement, while situational leadership identifies the need for leadership to adjust their leadership styles based on employee development. These approaches are vital for an employee development program to be successful. Garavan et al. (2002) emphasized that there is a "need for a variety of learning approaches including those that are deliberate, concrete, didactic, informal, experiential, task and non-task oriented, real time, continuous and asynchronous in nature" (p. 63). These suggested tactics of such a program are not as clearly defined, and tend to vary from one industry to the next.

Garavan et al. (2002) determined that cognitive processes should correlate with skill acquisition (p. 61), and focus on "knowledge, competence, formal learning interventions, utilising on-the-job training to enhance competencies" (p.63). This is a foundation for the Social Learning Ecosystem model proposed by Meister and Willyerd (2010), which consists of context-based and competency-based learning (see Figure 8). It is broken down into four quadrants: guided competency development, guided contextual learning, social competency development, and social contextual learning. Organizations having a strong understanding of each quadrant will, in turn, be able to manage a high performing employee development program.
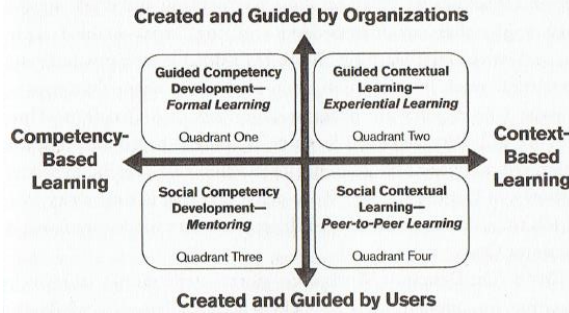
Figure 8: "The Social Learning Ecosystem" (Meister and Willyerd, 2010, p. 159)

Guided competency development consists of formal classroom learning. Kreissl (2015) noted that this formal training can be conducted in-house or by local educational institutions or providers. The topics are typically recurrent and common coursework for employees. This makes up the component of formal training in an employee development program and can be in class or online. (Meister & Willyerd, 2010).

Within the Social Learning Ecosystem, Meister and Willyerd (2010) identified guided contextual learning as a customized training such as on-the-job (OJT) training, mentoring, and coaching towards specific job skills. These components are structured by the organization to satisfy specific tasks or skills necessary to complete assigned work and can be in class or online (pp. 168-173). Swamidass (2003) referenced a study by the National Association of Manufacturers in the USA to conclude that, "OJT is the leading training method – over 77 percent of the manufacturers surveyed use it as the dominant method of developing employees" (p. 10). He also noted that employees can obtain up to ninety percent of their skills through OJT (p. 11). Therefore, guided contextual learning is a high importance portion of this model. However, Jacobs and Bu-Rahmah (2012) found that structured OJT is a more beneficial method for guided contextual learning and is more efficient (p. 78). As the 70:20:10 model reference earlier shows, companies should focus on guided contextual learning.

Succession planning or career paths make up the social competency development quadrant. Meister and Willyerd (2010) stated that "developing many individuals in the same

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competencies allows an organization to ensure alignment in the system so that as people move into more highly managed talent brackets, their development as a unit has already begun" (p. 173). This is incredibly important to ensure no gaps in knowledge exist within the company. Gupta et al. (2014) found that training and development, "should correlate…with career planning for both managerial and non-managerial employees" (p. 234). Cross-functional training is one aspect of succession planning and career paths. Through mentoring, leadership can provide knowledge to cross-train employees, in order to move along designated career paths.

Latif (2012) realized that "work-related knowledge is outdated quickly" (p. 214), while Moore (2004) found that there is a difference between observing, using, and performing newly obtained knowledge on the job (p.331). Meister and Willyerd (2010) noted that "People's ability to share knowledge directly with each other on topics relevant to their work environment is one of the most leading-edge advances in learning", which makes up the quadrant on social contextual learning (p. 176). "Adults learn more efficiently when they are allowed to talk about the subject, relate it to their own experiences, and discover the usefulness of the skills for themselves" (Hughey & Mussnug, 1997, p. 53). Employees who have the opportunities to discuss work being done, potential improvements in processes, and improved tool availability have the empowerment of improving their own performance and learning. Whether face-to-face or in an online forum, employees should discuss and help each other learn the latest within their industries. Mentoring, coaching, and social networking are all facets of this quadrant. (Meister & Willyerd, 2010).

A review of the literature, along with the Social Learning Ecosystem, suggests that there are predetermined characteristics of a strong employee development program that includes apprenticeships, formal and informal training, succession planning and career paths, mentoring and coaching, and social networking opportunities. The extent of each component depends upon the individual company and industry requirements. Knowledge of the importance of each facet is vital to the success of the employee development program. As Moore (2004) concluded, "that

understanding creates the possibility of productive interventions – not determine plans, not lessons, but strategies that might increase the likelihood of someone's learning" (p. 338).

Known Barriers

The literature identified several barriers to developing employees within industry. These included financial concerns, time constraints, lack of resources, poor trainers, and adult learning issues. As noted by Hughey and Mussnug (1997), management must support all training initiatives and be actively involved throughout the learning process (p. 54).

Financial concerns encompass time constraints as well. When workers are taken away from production to participate in development activities the company is losing production time and money. This can "adversely affect production schedules and deadlines" (Hughey & Mussnug, 1997, p. 56). Training programs are usually the first to get eliminated. Hughey and Mussnug (1997) concluded that "When the balance sheet indicates that budget cuts may be necessary; one of the first areas to receive careful scrutiny is employee training" (p. 55).

Trainees who are required to participate in development activities must be willing to learn. Illeris (2003) asserted that "Each individual student is still responsible for the learning and it is the participant him or herself who, consciously or unconsciously in the actual situation,…decides whether the result is to be learning" (p. 173). The trainer cannot force the worker to learn or even apply the newly obtained information. Even for those employees who learn new skills, there is still the ability and time to apply this new knowledge on the job. (Buchanan et al., 1985). As noted previously, leadership does not always understand what is required for the worker to practice on the job and may not provide adequate time for this application.

Another issue is the lack of expertise of the trainer. Hughey and Mussnug (1997) discussed how "many companies routinely entrust their training initiatives to managers who have little or no background, expertise, or formal education in the area of employee training" (p. 54). Hence, these trainers are often highly skilled workers with little idea of how to teach others.

Buchanan et al. (1985) surmised that often programs are considered fads. Companies hear of the latest and greatest training program and decide to implement it without proper preparation or follow through. This leads employees to thinking it is just "the flavor of the month" course. These programs are conducted without a "formal needs assessment or content analysis", and the "content of the program itself is not perceived by the participant as relevant to the organization's needs" (Buchanan et al., 1985, p. 6).

Summary

A quality employee development program implementation should be guided by the Operational Model, following the Awareness, Decision, Implementation, Evaluation, and Support Stages. The Social Learning Ecosystem is the guidance point for the Decision and Implementation Stages, by way of including adequate contextual and competency development. Situational leadership is vital to the development of employees based on their skill abilities for each task in the Social Learning EcoSystem. All of these concepts will assist in eliminating the barriers that companies face when developing employees.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter is a discussion of the methodology used in conducting this study. Sections are included which discuss the population and sample, instrumentation, and procedures for data collection and analysis.

Institutional Review Board

An application was submitted and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to the start of this study. The application included the purpose, research problem, and description of the study. A thorough description of the study participants and timeframe were included. The process to obtain consent was outlined as an initial question in the survey. No collected data would be linked back to the participants due to anonymity.

It was identified that no subjects would encounter the possibility of stress during the study and no medical clearance was necessary. The researcher did not deploy deception, and did not ask any personal or sensitive information. The material presented to the subjects was not offensive, threatening, or degrading. Participants were not offered any inducements for their participation in the survey.

The benefits of the study to the subjects and society were outlined in the IRB application as stated next. Employees are the backbone of companies. Industry must constantly strive to improve their workforce, in order to remain competitive in its respective markets. The results of this study will be beneficial for all manufacturing industries as a guide for structured employee development. It will become a tool for human resource departments when creating and maintaining their programs, thus ultimately improving employee performance.

Research Design

A qualitative study was conducted by surveying human resource agents in manufacturing industries within Northeast Oklahoma. This descriptive study was designed to identify what employee development practices are currently being used, and what companies recognize as barriers and benefits of their programs. The results were used to establish suggested beneficial components of an employee development program while working around potential barriers companies face in managing their programs.

This research study began by obtaining a list of manufacturing companies in Northeast Oklahoma. The researcher has lived and worked in this area. It was chosen based on familiarity with the area, and to provide a context for future research. Initial contact with each organization was made via email or company online contact form to solicit participation in an anonymous survey through Survey Monkey. It was desired for human resources personnel to take part. The study was active for a two week period.

Once the survey time period closed, data was correlated into themes as an interrelationship study to determine the relationships among obtained survey responses. Emerging themes were analyzed based on descriptive phenomenology, or the relationship of the collected data, to provide recommended components of an employee development program. Repeatability was expected for validation purposes.

Research Questions

1. What employee development components are currently being used by manufacturing industries in Northeast Oklahoma?
2. What are the benefits to developing the workforce?
3. What barriers exist when developing employees in manufacturing industries?

Population and Sample

Northeast Oklahoma includes counties: Adair, Cherokee, Craig, Creek, Delaware, Mayes, Muskogee, Ottawa, Nowata, Okmulgee, Osage, Pawnee, Rogers, Sequoyah, Tulsa, Wagoner, and

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Washington counties. The industries included in this study are listed in Table 1.

Panagiotakopoulos (2011) noted that small business owners, "are very often reluctant to invest in people" (p. 15) due to the possibility of losing their skilled employees to other companies, and the fact that small business owners are often focused on today versus tomorrow outlook of the company (Panagiotakopoulos, 2011). Therefore, this study only considered companies with 100 or more employees. A list of all manufacturing companies in Northeast Oklahoma with appropriate number of employees was generated through the Research Wizard at the Tulsa County Library. Originally, it has been determined that there were 160 manufacturing industries in Northeast Oklahoma. After further review, it was found there were several duplicate companies listed under multiple names. After eliminating these twenty-two duplicates, there were 138 companies in the desired population. Out of these companies; one hundred one have 100-249 employees, twenty-six have 250-499 employees, nine have 500-999, and two have 1000-9999 employees.

The population was defined by only manufacturing industries in the geographical location of Northeast Oklahoma. Therefore, a purposive sample of the identified 138 manufacturing companies, from the Research Wizard database, was obtained through introductory email contact with the homogenous human resource management representatives. This theoretical sampling was relative to the number of companies willing to participate in the survey for this qualitative study. The desired respondent rate was twenty percent of companies irrelevant of size. After evaluation of the number of responses to the survey, it was determined that the actual number of respondents was ten percent of the entire population. Further review noted that three of those companies fell outside of the desired population and were disqualified, resulting in the final percentage of participation at seven percent.

Table 1: SIC Codes and Industry Types

SIC Code	Industry Title
20	Food and Kindred Products
22	Textile Mill Products
23	Apparel, Finished Products from Fabric Materials
24	Lumber and Wood Products, Except Furniture
25	Furniture and Fixtures
26	Paper and Allied Products
28	Chemical and Allied Products
30	Rubber and Miscellaneous Plastic Products
31	Leather and Leather Products
32	Stone, Clay, Glass, and Concrete Products
33	Primary Metal Industries
34	Fabricated Metal Products, Except Machinery and Transportation Equipment
35	Industrial and Commercial Machinery Equipment
36	Electronic, Electrical Equipment & Components, Except Computer Equipment
37	Transportation Equipment
38	Measure/Analyze/Control Instruments; Photo/Med/Opt Goods; Watches/Clocks

Instrumentation

Initial contact with members of the human resource department for each company within the designated population was conducted via email (see Appendix A) to request participation in the online survey (see Appendix B) through Survey Monkey. The intent was to ask demographic, knowledge, experience, and opinion questions concerning:

- Current employee development program components

- Barriers and benefits of existing program

- Demographics such as industry, employee count, years in service for company

- Approximate costs of the program

All questions were poised as open-ended questions with the option to expound on any of the questions. In an attempt to eliminate bias, the survey did not interject opinions and remained

objective during the process. There was minimal contact with the participants through the initial survey invitation email, thus minimized potential for researcher bias.

Table 2: Survey Questions Relevance to Research Questions

Research Question	Survey Question
Demographics	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Question 1	6, 7, 10
Question 2	8, 9
Question 3	11, 12, 13, 14

This credible instrument was designed to ensure content-related evidence of validity. A committee reviewed the interview questions and collection format to ensure desired data collection was aligned with the questions being asked. Due to the expectation of similarities in responses, reliability was measured by repeatability.

Procedures

Prior to the initial contact, a search was conducted for each company online over a period of one week. The intent of the search was to locate contact information for the human resources (HR) departments. It was found that this information is not generally listed on company websites. An alternative was to locate a general inquiries email address, and request that the recipients forward the email to the HR department for the Northeast Oklahoma location. There were several instances where there was no email address available, but rather a phone number instead. These particular companies were called to request the email address for the HR personnel. A database was maintained for all communication, including contact email and/or phone number, date contacted, and feedback received.

Data was collected online through Survey Monkey, and was available for two weeks from the date of initial contact. The researcher did not send any survey reminders. Once the time period ended, all responses were categorized. Participants and their companies remained anonymous; however, their industries were noted. In order to eliminate any bias, input was added for clarification purposes only as needed.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed qualitatively by reviewing all of the responses, and determining relationships for each survey question. The survey responses were analyzed based on descriptive phenomenology to discover what was being done for employee development and how it was being achieved. Inductive reasoning was followed to analyze the phenomena.

The data was organized into common topics reflecting the responses to each survey question. A full review of the survey responses was analyzed to identify repeatability and emerging ideas. Content analysis was conducted for all responses, in order to cluster them into themes based on the suggested components, barriers, organizational cultures, and costs of employee development programs. These were grouped by question responses into the five themes: (1) demographics, (2) concept of employee development, (3) organizational culture for developing employees, (4) actual components used in existing program, and (5) program costs. It was proposed that many of the human resource managers would note the same components necessary for employee performance improvement.

Barriers and benefits of employee development were clustered as well. Relationships were used to determine possible solutions to barriers, and ways to enhance identified benefits through program structure for new and existing employees. A review of this information was used to interpret ways to overcome barriers and achieve higher benefits for the company.

Data was then summarized in response to the three research questions proposed. Participants' answers to the survey questions provided insight into the existing programs along with the benefits and barriers foreseen by the respondents.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This section provides details of the findings from this research study. Using qualitative analysis, each research question will be addressed along with the determined themes. Originally, there were twelve survey participants. After review of the data, it was noticed that three of the respondents fell outside of the population with less than 100 employees. These three surveys were disqualified from the study results.

Research Questions

1. What employee development components are currently being used by manufacturing industries in Northeast Oklahoma?

2. What are the benefits to developing the workforce?

3. What barriers exist when developing employees in manufacturing industries?

Instrumentation Overview

The survey results were summarized into five themes after analyzing the responses as shown in Table 2. Each theme encompassed one or more of the survey questions. Verbatim responses are provided from the participants.

Table 3: Survey Question Themes

Question	Theme
1, 2, 3, 4, 5	Demographics
6, 7, 9	Concept of employee development
8, 12, 13,14	Organizational culture for developing employees
10	Actual components used in existing program
11	Program costs

Demographics

The demographics of the sample included specific industry, time in business, number of employees, percentage of production employees, and percentage of support employees as shown in Table 3. The time in business varied from 25 years to 160 years, and the number of employees ranged from 200 to 5000. The percentages of production employees were valued at 60 to 85 percent, while support employees were 10 to 40 percent.

Table 4: Demographics

Respondent ID	Industry	Years Operating	Number of Employees	Percentage of Production Workers	Percentage of Support Workers
Company A	Manufacturing	25	340	85	15
Company B	HVAC	45	285	75	10
Company C	Aerospace	47	2500	60	40
Company D	Flexible Packaging	25	200	75	25
Company E	Manufacturing	80	350	60	40
Company F	Building Materials	75	300	70	30
Company G	Oil and Gas Industry	20	200	72	28
Company H	Manufacturing	160	5000	60	40
Company I	Aerospace	30	250	75	25

A review of the demographics and related responses shows that there is not a notable difference in how employee development is managed in relation to company size, industry, and years in operation. Each company appears to have similar struggles with the acceptance of the time and cost necessary to improve the performance of their workers.

Concept of Employee Development

Three questions on the survey addressed the participants' concepts of employee

development:

- Question 6: How do you define employee development?

- Question 7: How do you handle an employee that does not perform well?

- Question 9: What benefits do you see with developing employees in the workplace?

Not all of the participants answered all three questions. However, the responses provided

identified the concept of employee development by the respondents. Tables 4-6 outline the

verbatim responses provided.

Table 5: Definition of Employee Development

Respondent ID	Question 6: How do you define employee development?
Company A	At this point and time, employee development involves becoming better at your current job with the possibility of moving to another area if you desire. However, we have started a new employee development department in the last 4 months, and this will probably change our definition of employee development.
Company C	Building upon a stakeholder's skillset and behaviors to generate a greater result for the employees themselves and the organization as a whole.
Company D	Coaching, supporting, and mentoring employees in their current job to position them for advancement.
Company E	Total training of employees. This includes training for the job they were hired to do, training in company culture and training to prepare them for future opportunities.
Company F	Employee development is an initiative to improve the employee's knowledge, skills, and abilities. Both employee and employer are responsible for this.
Company G	Employee development is very important to our company. We would always rather promote from within before bringing in someone who has never worked for our company. It is our goal to listen to our employee. To understand where they want their career to go or which direction they want it to move within the organizations structure. We will then help the employee develop goals that will assist them along the way. This allows the employee to what some of the requirements are for a position they are considering as well as developing strong team players for our company. We also provide our employees with mentors in positions they are considering as well as training classes that will help them prepare for their new position.
Company I	Employee development is the purposeful offerings of the company to develop their talent group and give the opportunity to acquire new skills and knowledge.

Table 6: Managing Poor Performing Employees

Respondent ID	Question 7: How do you handle an employee that does not perform well?
Company A	We currently work with the employee to determine what reasons could be affecting performance. From the information gathered, we come up with a plan to work on improving performance.
Company B	Coaching and correcting, Giving regular feedback, Performance Management then progressive discipline.
Company C	Coaching, support, mentoring, accountability and performance discipline as applicable.
Company D	Provide support and encouragement through coaching and mentoring. Progressive discipline when appropriate.
Company E	They are retrained, counseled or terminated depending on the performance.
Company F	Counseling, Performance Improvement plans
Company G	If we have a poor performer, supervisors always try to assist that employee first. We try to find out why they may be struggling or work with them in areas we can see that they are having a hard time with. We also pair them with more experienced employees to try to assist them with learning the position better. There are times that no matter how hard you try to train someone that it just does not work out for either the company or the employee.
Company H	They are usually written up and put on a Performance Improvement Plan
Company I	We have a process of assimilating and training to increase the chances of successful performance. But when it just cannot be achieved, we review the employee's skill set to see if other opportunities exist in the organization. And if this fails, we go through a performance improvement, 90day development plan.

Table 7: Benefits of Developing Employees

Respondent ID	Question 9: What benefits do you see with developing employees in the workplace?
Company A	Improved morale, more loyal employee, ability to promote from within, better product, increased production, lower injury rates
Company B	Improved company performance, increased job satisfaction among employees,
Company C	Multiple facets, investment in the stakeholder aside from comp and benefits, succession planning, continuous improvement and growth for the organization. Building on behaviors and skills benefits all involved.
Company D	Succession planning is imperative in this environment. Development of current employees allows us the leverage to grow and replace employees when desired with internal candidates.
Company E	The company will be more successful. The employees feel successful and feel as though their work has meaning and the company will be more profitable.
Company F	Higher employee retention, higher productivity, reduce turnover,
Company G	By developing current employees you are creating assets for the company. To have an employee work their way up from the bottom gives a perspective that not everyone just coming into the company can have. If you go from building the product first hand to helping design or develop a product, you have more experience about struggles that could be faced while building as well as knowledge of things you know work well and things that do not work at all.
Company I	The personal benefit to the employee is obvious but there is also a big benefit to the company. Providing opportunities to develop increases the chance of successfully back-filling positions as needed, it allows for creation of new roles with candidates who already understand the company and have context, and it keeps the culture fresh and engaging for all who are willing.

Table 4 has a commonality that employee development is to help employees perform their jobs exceptionally well. Many agree that this not only helps the employee, but the organization as a whole. It is also identified as a way for employees to move up the career ladder. Succession planning and career paths appear important to these participants.

Table 5 notes that employees performing poorly are often retrained, coached, and mentored. Performance improvement plans are often devised for the employee performing below company standards. Many state that termination is a potential if the employee cannot make necessary changes.

In regards to research question 2, the participants identified what they consider benefits to developing employees. Table 6 has a focus on the benefits to the company along with the employees. They all understand that a better performing employee leads to higher retention, motivation, and organizational success.

Understanding the concept of employee development is crucial in overcoming barriers, and improving existing plans. Companies will not implement a strong program if they do not understand the importance to their overall success. As shown in the literature review, this is an area of concern that can be overcame with additional information on the value of developing workers to improve performance.

Organizational Culture for Developing Employees

Four questions on the survey addressed the organizations' cultures for employee development since these address how the organization manages their programs:

- Question 8: Do you feel your company provides an environment for employee learning and improvement?

- Question 12: Who is responsible for managing employee development (title only)?

- Question 13: What barriers does your company face when trying to improve the performance of your employees?

- Question 14: Do you feel there is more your company can do to improve employee development? If yes, what would you suggest?

Not all of the participants answered all four questions. However, the responses provided identified the organization's value of employee development. Every participant responded "Yes" to Question 8. Tables 7-9 outline the verbatim responses provided.

Table 8: Responsible for Employee Development

Respondent ID	Question 12: Who is responsible for managing employee development?
Company A	Director of employee development and chief operating officer
Company B	Chief Talent Officer
Company C	All leaders and Senior Manager of Talent Managment
Company D	Department Managers and Supervisors
Company E	Director of People Development, HR Manager, and all other Managers (OTJ training)
Company F	Managers/Supervisors
Company G	Human Resource Generalist
Company I	HR management

Table 9: Barriers to Developing Employees

Respondent ID	Question 13: What barriers does your company face when trying to improve the performance of your employees?
Company A	Not much turnover- we have a lot of long time employees, some of whom do not feel they need more training and do not like change; no immediate gratification- they want to see improvement now, and it will take time; and, the group that has the "what's in it for me" attitude.
Company B	Turnover, Retention and application of skills learned
Company C	Resistance to change, finding time with the constraints of manufacturing, breaking down barriers.
Company D	Production deadlines and time constraints are typically our largest barriers. It is difficult to pull employees away from their day to day responsibilities to train them, and it is also difficult to designate a trainer to remain with an employee for OJT throughout their training period. Generational tendencies is also a challenge. Gen Y employees are typically less motivated to work independently than their predecessors.
Company E	Time, money, desire from the employee
Company F	Time and additional resources to conduct/take training
Company G	One of the biggest is employees who are content with their position. There is nothing wrong with being content and happy where you are. There is a problem with not wanting to learn new practices to making your position more effective or efficient. When employee development is brought up in most companies, many employees believe you are just trying to groom them for a new position. They do not always see that we are just trying to stay up with industry standards and new technology changes as well.
Company I	The major barriers we face are: time away from daily work, cost of quality programs, and securing buy-in among supervisors that this is a valuable pursuit.

Table 10: Suggested Improvements for Employee Development Programs

Respondent ID	Question 14: Do you feel there is more your company can do to improve employee development? If yes, what would you suggest?	Suggested Improvements
Company A	Yes	We are working on getting our supervisory and management staff more involved with training and employee development.
Company B	Yes	Improve on the job training, start mentorship programs, develop leaders
Company C	Yes	Employee Development is never ending, so it is constantly finding ways to adapt and meet in the middle with people needs and the organizations needs.
Company D	Yes	More training and development for the Supervisory ranks.
Company E	Yes	Find additional cost savings so more can be invested into training, work more efficiently
Company F	Yes	
Company G	Yes	There is always room for improvement. I cannot think of a specific example at this moment, but the second we think we can do nothing else is when the quality of current efforts decreases.
Company H	Yes	
Company I	Yes	

In order for a company to successfully implement and maintain an employee development program, the organizational culture must be conducive. Creating a learning environment, appointing a dedicated facilitator of the program, minimizing the barriers, and having future vision for potential changes to existing programs are some of the essential elements to ensuring a powerful program.

Deciding who manages employee performance standards and issues attests to the company's culture for employees. An assigned person can focus on performance issues rather than production deadlines and processes. Table 7 shows that five of the companies have a designated employee to manage employee development while the other four rely on the

employees' superiors to manage this. This shows the importance that the company culture places on improving the performance of their workers.

Research question 3 concerns the barriers to employee development. The responses, as shown in Table 8, provide insight into the cultural and organizational barriers these companies face when attempting to develop their employees. These include

- Unmotivated employees

- Employee complacency

- High turnover and retention issues

- Resistance to change

- Time constraints and production deadlines

- Lack of designated trainers

- Lack of understanding development opportunities

- Cost of quality programs

- Lack of leadership support

According to Table 9, the participants realize there is a need for additional employee development opportunities, but most cannot determine how to implement new tactics due to the barriers listed previously.

Actual Components Used in Employee Development Programs

One question on the survey requested that the participants check the recommended components currently being used in their programs:

- Question 10: The literature shows the following components are necessary for an employee development program. Please check the current components of your program.

    o Formal Training

    o Tuition Assistance

    o On-the-Job Training

- o Coaching

- o Mentorships

- o Apprenticeships

- o Performance Reviews

- o Career Paths

- o Other (fill in the blank)

The responses varied with no one filling in the Other blank. Table 10 shows the items checked

by the respondent.

Table 11: Actual Components Used for Employee Development

Respondent ID	Question 10: The literature shows the following components are necessary for an employee development program. Please check the current components of your program?							
	Formal classroom training	Tuition assistance	On-the-Job training	Coaching	Mentoring	Apprentic eships	Performan ce reviews	Career paths
Company A	X		X	X			X	
Company B	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Company C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Company D	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Company E	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Company F	X	X	X				X	
Company G	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Company H		X	X				X	X
Company I	X	X	X	X			X	

Research question 1 proposes that there are existing components used by companies to

develop their workers. The companies who participated in the study confirm their use of the

majority of the suggested components as shown in Table 10. From a review of the literature and

answers to other survey questions, there may be a limit on how in-depth and structured these are

within the development of employees. For example, Question 7 asks how the company manages

a poor performing employee. The responses lead quickly to termination. Having a structured

plan to improve the performance of the employee through the suggested components could

reduce the turnover, and increase motivation to learn.

Question 13 implicates that time, cost, and employee motivation are barriers to

maintaining an employee development program. These would affect the level of use for the

suggested components. If production deadlines are approaching, then not much time will be

spent on completing on-the-job training. This is a struggle for all industry, and will be addressed

in Chapter 5.

These components will be used in creating a suggested employee development plan for

the manufacturing industry. A detailed plan for each step will address new, non-producing, and

producing employees.

Program Costs

One question on the survey addressed the program costs for employee development within

the organization:

- Question 11: Approximately how much does your company spend on developing

  employees?

Few of the participants answered this question. The ones who did respond were mostly vague,

not supplying concrete numbers. Table 11 outlines the verbatim responses provided.

Table 12: Costs of Existing Employee Development Program

Respondent ID	Question 11: Approximately how much does your company spend on developing employees?
Company A	approximately $20,000 a year
Company C	Variable
Company D	Not currently tracked
Company E	250000
Company G	I do not know as this is mainly handled by our Corporate leaders

Although several of the participants and the literature identified that cost was a major barrier, only one of the companies knew the actual dollar amount spent on their programs. Employees responsible for the performance improvement of workers must understand the actual costs, and the benefits they provide. Lack of tracking the costs or providing a budget can cause leadership to ignore the value of employee development.

Audit Trail

The original population, obtained from the Tulsa County Library Research Wizard, listed 164 manufacturing companies in Northeast Oklahoma with 100 or more employees. Upon further review of company names, websites, contact information, and email replies, several of the companies listed were disqualified for a number of reasons. Table 12 is an audit trail for the non-participation of potential sample companies.

Table 13: Audit Trail

Reason for Non-Participation	Total
No local email contact available	13
Closed for business	1
Corporate office refused approval to participate	2
Duplicate company	22
No working phone or website	8
Industry falls outside of population	3
Responded but fell outside of population	3

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This section will discuss the data obtained in the findings, recommendations for practice, and implications for future research opportunities. A plan will be presented for new and existing employees to improve performance.

Conclusions of Survey Responses

The survey results clearly show that companies in the manufacturing industry understand the importance of implementing and maintaining an employee development program. As Company E stated in response to the definition of employee development, "Total training of employees. This includes training for the job they were hired to do, training in company culture and training to prepare them for future opportunities." However, the human resource agents identify that they have barriers to overcome in order to improve existing practices. The data suggests that these companies do not have a complete understanding of what is required for a structured, progressive improvement plan. From new employees to existing employees, a plan must be in place and someone must be held accountable for its results.

Suggested Components of an Employee Development Program

Through an extensive literature review and experience, a suggested list of components for a successful employee development program includes: (a) formal training, (b) tuition assistance, (c) on-the-job training, (d) coaching, (e) mentorships, (f) apprenticeships, (g) performance reviews, and (h) career paths. These must be utilized in a structured process to be effective.

Each will be discussed along with suggestions on improving existing practices.

 Formal Training. In reference to the Operational Model, formal training is a part of the Implementation Stage. Formal training consists of on-site and off-site classes with specific content focus, degree and certification programs through higher education organizations, and community learning programs. Hughey and Mussnug (1997) defined formal training as education instead of training. "Education typically takes place in a classroom and involves a transfer of knowledge through the use of formal methods such as lectures and directed discussions" (p. 53). This education or learning can be instructor-led or computer-based. Formal training is a factor in the Social Learning Ecosystem in the guided competency quadrant, and is valuable for providing employees with new knowledge, refreshers of existing regulations and content, required certifications, and degrees which help move workers along a determined career path.

 Formal training can be costly and time consuming, depending on the type of program. The study participants noted the time constraints due to production deadlines as a barrier for employee development. Formal classroom training may take time to accomplish, but is actually a quick way to train a large number of employees at one time. The benefits are vast in that the employee receives training which provides regulatory compliance and re-certification for specific job tasks.

 Tuition Assistance. The costs of higher education can be overwhelming to the average worker. Companies, who provide tuition assistance, not only help with the expenses, but also alleviate pressure on the employee who wants to expand his or her education. Eight of the nine survey participants noted that their organization offers tuition assistance. Companies often have a structured process for applying and receiving tuition assistance. These policies should be made known to all employees.

 Guided competency development of the Social Learning Ecosystem focuses on formal training or education. When it is found that a certification is required for a worker to perform his or her job, then tuition assistance or reimbursement is necessary. Often times, it is suggested by

leadership that an employee should obtain a degree or certification in order to move along a determined career path. Tuition assistance can enable this worker to pursue higher education, leading to an increase in motivation.

On-the-Job Training (OJT). According to guided contextual development of the Social Learning Ecosystem, on-the job training is a hands-on approach to enhanced training of employees. OJT is the number one employee development tactic in manufacturing industry (Swamidass, 2003). Swamidass (2003) noted that "Advances in production processes and the advent of new technology are prompting manufacturing firms to offer increased levels of training that is job-specific" (p. 11). It consists of a worker learning a new task from a more experience worker while actually performing the job. In some industries, such as aerospace, OJT is required and must be recorded formally. It is a valuable component of an employee development program.

There are several issues concerning OJT. First, not all companies require employees to record their OJT experiences. The supervisor does not know exactly what the worker has trained on, and therefore, cannot provide coaching for improvement. An employee cannot be held accountable for poor performance if there is no record of what training has occurred. Second, supervisors must identify what type of OJT they want their employees to practice. By providing a task list upfront, the worker knows what the expectations of him or her are. Third, there is not always a plan for implementing OJT sessions. Each item on the OJT list should have a structured training associated with it. Fourth, the trainers expected to work with the employee do not have the skills to teach others (Mortimer & Riding, 2000). In the survey, Company D stated that "it is also difficult to designate a trainer to remain with an employee for OJT throughout their training period." Train the Trainer courses should be offered to all employees who train on the job, and if possible, designate trainers to work with employees.

Structured OJT has proven to be beneficial to the worker and trainer. Following the Operational Model, structured OJT should be created through the every stage, from Awareness to

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Support. Deciding what tasks are required, implementing the OJT, and evaluating its effectiveness is instrumental in a productive OJT program. Bu-Rahmah and Jacobs (2012) asserted that structured OJT "offers some apparent advantages for managers because the training might be conducted when the employee need arises and without demanding any special resources from the organization" (p. 76). It takes time to create a structured OJT program, but the benefits of improved work performance, employee motivation, and retention are invaluable.

Coaching. "Coaching enhances skills and ability and can raise a person's game. It gives individuals the opportunity to review themselves, their performance and identify where enhancements can be made" (Development and Learning in Organizations, 2008, 28). This portion of guided contextual learning in the Social Learning Ecosystem is a method to address performance issues, and an opportunity to provide positive interactions. Having a coaching plan in place is beneficial for the employee and supervisor. Open communication concerning issues is important for all parties.

Coaching is an investment of time in employees. Several of the companies surveyed stated that coaching is how they manage performance issues. Through situational leadership, the leadership style, S2, focuses on the coaching aspect. Employees with a development level of D2 or D3 benefit from a structured coaching method in order to correct performance issues. (Development and Learning in Organizations, 2008, 28). Coaches must set obtainable objects for the employee. Follow up and feedback should be sought after coaching sessions and they should be documented.

Mentorships. Mentorships are ideal for new employees. This is a portion of the guided contextual and social contextual development of the Social Learning Ecosystem. Providing a mentor will help assimilate the new employee into the best practices of the organization. It also gives the worker someone to trust when there is an issue.

Mentorships are also suitable for existing employees with performance issues. As Company G stated in the survey, "We also pair them with more experienced employees to try to

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assist them with learning the position better." Care must be taken to match the mentor and mentee appropriately, based on personalities and work ethic. A mismatch can prove devastating to everyone involved. A structure should also be in place to ensure the mentor approaches all desired characteristics of the position for the new employee.

Apprenticeships. Apprenticeships were, in the past, the preferred way workers learned their skills. Companies today still use apprenticeships in order to ensure workers learn, precisely, knowledge and skills required to the job for the specific company. Four of the nine companies surveyed noted that they use this method. It is a time consuming practice, as it can take years, but the results are a highly skilled worker.

An effective apprentice program should follow the Operation Model. There must be an awareness of the need for job specific training, decisions must be made as to what the program will include, the program should be evaluated continually to ensure all objectives are being met, and it should be continually supported and reviewed for improvement opportunities. South Carolina implemented Apprenticeship 2000, which prepares young people to enter industry with skills necessary to perform their trade. It was designed to offer "four years of free training split between school and the workplace, and a job upon completion" (Sorensen, 2014, para. 1). This program was modeled after the German method of apprenticeships. Although this is a powerful program, it is not necessarily feasible in all locations. Typically apprenticeships are created per individual companies, and therefore require internal program structure to be aligned with company goals.

Performance Reviews. Every company, including those surveyed, offers performance reviews in some form. This aligns with the Evaluation Stage of the Operational Model leading to the Support Stage. Performance reviews can be formal or informal. They are typically conducted once a year, and provide the employee with feedback to his or her performance. There are two concerns about performance reviews; timeliness of feedback, and performance improvement tactics.

Employees who only receive feedback on their performance annually can often struggle with improving themselves throughout the year. For new employees, reviews should be conducted more frequently to ensure adequate initial performance and growth. Existing employees with performance issues require frequent feedback to ensure skill ability is improving as expected. J. Russell and L. Russell (2010) noted that, "the performer must see the logical connection between her own behaviors, the performance outcomes from these behaviors, and the positive or negative consequences that she receives" (p. 48).

The other issue with performance reviews is that rarely is there a plan to improve the skills addressed in the review. J. Russell and L. Russell (2010) identified that, "if your managers haven't mastered all the other key components that contribute to performance, their performance reviews are likely to fail" (p. 43). He or she often tells the worker that he or she is floundering in one area or another, but does not provide tools, such as training or coaching, to improve those skills. The employee is left to wait for the next annual performance review or termination before knowing if he or she has made any advancements. Superiors have a responsibility to use performance reviews to improve the skills of their employees.

Career Paths. Career paths, also known as succession planning, are vital to the future of a company. As employees retire, quit, or are terminated, there needs to be a worker ready to take over that position. Social competency development of the Social Learning Ecosystem addresses career paths. Having multiple employees trained with specific job skills will help to keep the organization operating in the case of employee termination. Company D noted that, "It takes time to train someone on a new position, and often production schedules do not allow for this time delay." Having a career path for employees to follow not only motivates the workers, but helps the company to remain stable and operating as normal.

Several survey responses spoke about hiring from within the organization. Company G responded, "To have an employee work their way up from the bottom gives a perspective that not everyone just coming into the company can have. If you go from building the product first hand

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to helping design or develop a product, you have more experience about struggles that could be faced while building as well as knowledge of things you know work well and things that do not work at all." Preparing employees to move up the career ladder is an investment which motivates workers to improve their own performance and learn more. Four of the companies surveyed directly stated that a benefit of employee development is succession planning.

Gupta et al. (2014) concluded that "dissatisfaction has been found in the promotion opportunities created by training and development practices" (p. 234). There must be a succession plan available to workers so that they know what it takes to be promoted, and can be motivated by the available opportunities companywide. Once placed into a career path, OJT is an easy way to train the employee for upward movement.

On-Boarding of New Employees. What occurs in the first month of employment can determine the success of an employee. On-boarding was not an original suggested component, but survey responses recognized it as important. Company I responded that "We have a process of assimilating and training to increase the chances of successful performance." On-boarding or assimilating an employee into the organizational culture and job expectations is critical (Acevedo & Yancey, 2011, 350).

New employee programs offer culture integration, performance expectations, regulatory compliance training, and company policies. This program can be a few hours or a week long, but should be modeled via the Operational Model, from awareness to support, to ensure it is valuable for the newly hired employee. It is an investment in the retention of these new workers.

Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). Several survey responses addressed performance improvement plans or PIP. The Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) (2015) defined performance improvement planning as "a great way to give struggling employees the opportunity to succeed while still holding them accountable for past performance" (para. 1). These are for those employees not performing to company expectations, and have become a standard for industry prior to termination of the employee.

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SHRM suggested six steps to proper performance improvement planning; (1) document performance issues, (2) develop an action plan, (3) review the performance plan, (4) meet with the employee, (5) follow up, and (6) conclude the PIP (SHRM, 2015). This provides the employee with ample opportunity to make changes, and improve his or her performance. OJT, mentors, coaching, and formal training are all potential components of the PIP. If the employee does not abide by the PIP, then further action may include reassignment, demotion, or termination. (SHRM, 2015).

As a leader following the concept of situational leadership, it must be identified which development level the employee is at prior to corrective action. If the employee is a D1, then additional training, coaching, and mentoring should be offered. If the employee is a D2, then the lack of commitment should be addressed through coaching and career paths. A D3 or D4 employee may simply need coaching to improve performance and attitude.

Managing Employee Development

Depending upon the type of employee and performance situation, the employee development plan should be focused on various aspects. New employees require a different approach than existing employees. Existing employees need various components relative to their performance. The following is a suggested overview of what each type of employee development plan should include.

New Employees. New employees require different development opportunities than existing employees. Of the components listed previously, on-boarding is vital to their success. However, structured OJT, mentorships or apprenticeships, and formal training is important. Tuition assistance should be offered if certification is required for the new position.

Existing Employees. When speaking of existing employees, there are two considerations; is the employee producing or non-producing. Non-producing employees are struggling with the job requirements, while producing employees are performing as expected. Both require employee development, but in slightly different ways.

Producing Employee. An employee who is performing to all job expectations, and is highly skilled in his or her position, still requires development opportunities. The data shows that complacency is an issue with long-term workers. These employees feel they have learned all they need to know in order to continue in their current position. If they have no expectations of moving up the corporate ladder, then they do not see the value in employee development opportunities. As Company G stated, "They do not always see that we are just trying to stay up with industry standards and new technology changes as well." This is a concern for many of the study participants.

These employees must see the value in employee development opportunities. These may include formal training, OJT, career paths, and tuition assistance.

Non-Producing Employee. Non-producing employees still have potential to be great employees. Rather than just a write up and termination, supervisors must determine what has caused the lack of performance, and address it accordingly. This could be attributed to complacency, ability, or motivation. It may be that this employee would perform better in a different position. As Company I noted, "we review the employee's skill set to see if other opportunities exist in the organization."

These workers need motivation to improve. Coaching, OJT, formal training, and tuition assistance can provide this needed bump.

Overcoming Barriers

Table 9 lists the survey responses from participants concerning the barriers they face when trying to improve employee performance. In summary, the list includes; (a) unmotivated employees, (b) employee complacency, (c) high turnover and retention issues, (d) resistance to change, (e) time constraints and production deadlines, (f) lack of designated trainers, (g) lack of understanding development opportunities, (h) cost of quality programs, and (i) lack of leadership support.

The cost of employee development, along with the time constraints is typical in any organization. Leadership must recognize the value of highly skilled workers in order to understand the importance of employee development. This is a barrier that must be managed by all members of the organization to understand the cost savings involved when employees can minimize errors.

Employee complacency leads to unmotivated workers. The adult learner does have a resistance to change, and this barrier can be managed once it is understood. Illeris (2003) noted that adults are willing to learn when it interests or benefits them. Development opportunities that are aligned with a career path are strongly preferred. Their perspectives on learning are based on further qualification for a job, re-qualification to obtain a new position, and basic qualification for young workers (Illeris, 2003). Understanding the needs of employees will greatly enhance the development process per the individual.

Another known barrier is the abilities of the trainers, themselves, to train others. A train-the-trainer program is beneficial for the program. This will eliminate many frustrations among the trainer and trainee, and result in a higher level of learning.

Implications for Future Research

This study was focused on the manufacturing industry in Northeast Oklahoma with 100 or more employees. With the limited number of respondents, future research has implications for employee development improvement.

First, expanding the population outside of Northeast Oklahoma is essential. Understanding the value placed on employee development in different US regions would validate or add to the results of this study. Second, a qualitative approach of interviews with progressive companies would expand the knowledgebase of this study. The potential for employee development opportunities is vast, and to identify each will take a more in-depth qualitative approach.

Third, further study on the barriers companies face in developing employees, and how to overcome these is required. Cost effective ways of development could be identified, and a structured implementation developed.

Fourth, each industry would utilize the employee development components differently. The suggestion is that each component should be studied further to identify a structure for implementation, and suggested use. Fifth, another direction would be to review employee development within industries outside of manufacturing and how they use these suggested components.

There are implications for further study of this topic in relation to leadership, theory, and practice as well. The relationship between leadership and employee development must further be studied for the potential of new theory and practices existing in the realm of employee development by way of human development. These three topics could be the focus of a potentially strong research study which will relate to multiple areas of development.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Initial Email to Human Resource Departments

Greetings! I am conducting a study on employee development programs within the manufacturing industry in Northeast Oklahoma. The determined results will be used for my Master's thesis in Teaching, Learning, and Leadership: Occupational Education at Oklahoma State University.

Your company falls within my initial parameters for company size and industry. I hope that you would be willing to participate in my study by completing a short online survey through the link below. The questions pertain to the components of your employee development program, the barriers you face in improving employee performance, and the benefits your company sees in having a structured program

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/OSUstudy

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Tammy Wise
Tammywise8@gmail.com

Survey Questions

Title: Employee Development Program Components

Investigator: Tammy Wise

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to determine what components are currently being used to develop your employees along with the benefits and barriers associated with your program.

What to Expect: This research study is administered online. Participation in this research will involve completion of fourteen survey questions pertaining to your existing employee development program. You can skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. It should take you about 15 minutes to complete.
Risks: There are no risks associated with this project which are expected to be greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you. However, you may gain an appreciation and understanding of how research is conducted.

Your Rights and Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is voluntary. There is no penalty for refusal to participate, and you are free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time.

Confidentiality: Your participation in this survey is confidential. There are no questions identifying your company or yourself.

The records of this study will be kept private. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored on a password protected computer in a locked office and only researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records. Data will be destroyed three years after the study has been completed.

Contacts: You may contact the researcher at the following addresses and phone numbers, should you desire to discuss your participation in the study and/or request information about the results of the study: Tammy Wise, Graduate Department of Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, 918 -740-8612. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the IRB Office at 223 Scott Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu

Please, click NEXT if you choose to participate. By clicking NEXT, you are indicating that you freely and voluntarily agree to participate in this study and you also acknowledge that you are at least 18 years of age.

It is recommended that you print a copy of this consent page for your records before you begin the study by clicking below.

1. What industry does your company serve?

2. How long has the company been operating?

3. How many employees does your company employ?

4. What percentage would you consider as production employees?

5. What percentage would you consider as support employees?

6. How do you define employee development?

7. How do you handle an employee that does not perform well?

8. Do you feel your company provides an environment for employee learning and improvement?

9. What benefits do you see with developing employees in the workplace?

10. The literature shows the following components are necessary for an employee development program. Please check the current components of your program?

    a. Formal Training

    b. Tuition Assistance

    c. On-the-Job Training

    d. Coaching

    e. Mentorships

    f. Apprenticeships

    g. Performance Reviews

    h. Career Paths

    i. Other (fill in the blank)

11. What are the approximate costs of your program?

12. Who is responsible for managing employee development?

13. What barriers does your company face when trying to improve the performance of

your employees?

14. Do you feel there is more your company can do to improve employee

development? If so, what would you suggest?

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me. If you think of anything else you could add then please contact me. Upon completion of my study, I would be happy to provide you with the resulting document.

VITA

Tammy Lynn Wise

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: COMPONENTS OF EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

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The Persimmon Group	Senior Associate	2016-present
BizJet International	Program Manager: Training	2011-2016
Rescare	GED Math Instructor	2010-2011
Tile Shack Mosaic Supplies	Owner	2003-2010
Harrah Public Schools	Teacher	2002-2005
Elizabethton City Schools	Teacher	1997-2002