

Educational Needs Assessment for Warehouse Workers (Case of Govah Company)

Shokouh Alamati

School of Management, Islamic Azad University, Central branch, Tehran, Iran
Tel: +989122467865

Abstract: The purpose of this study is to perform a training needs assessment to find out if training will improve the warehouses performance problem and if changes need to be made with the warehouse's training procedures. With a goal for companies to reduce slack and to stream line inventory by moving to more modern practices such as just-in-time inventories it looked like warehousing was going to be superseded. The goal to streamline inventory is still intact, but warehousing has not only survived, it has picked up steam as a strategic logistics tool. Many things have allowed warehouses pick up business. Another reason has been their ability to justify their existence by finding better ways to meet the needs of their customers. In order to ensure better customer service warehouses have worked on their efficiency and accuracy. There are many ways to become more efficient; such as, order picking, operator training, and warehouse layout just to name a few.

[Shokouh Alamati. **Educational Needs Assessment for Warehouse Workers (Case of Govah Company)**. *Life Sci J* 2013;10(1):1347-1351] (ISSN:1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 203

Keywords: Training, Need assessment, Warehousing, Govah, Iran

1. Introduction

An important issue effecting warehouses today is competition in the marketplace. With all of the choices that consumers have the marketplace has become very competitive. In an effort to contend with their competition warehouses have had to make many changes in order satisfy their customer's needs. Some changes include updating processes, technology and warehouse procedures. Ray Gillen, author of the article *Distribution Centers Leap Ahead with Upscale Training* stated that "Warehousing and distribution centers have been transformed in recent years by an explosion of technology, changing how business is conducted"(Gillen, 2001). Training is important and the need for training is growing as a result of more modern technologies being used and the need for skilled workers in the warehousing industry rising. Warehouses most commonly use training to implement warehouse management systems and to cross train employees on several tasks rather than to a discreet task. Warehouses may also use training for mobile equipment operation such as fork trucks. Training has long been an issue for companies even more so for smaller facilities mostly because of the cost and the times associated with training. Smaller employee operated companies cannot afford the lost time from production and do not have the number of employees required for people to be training during working hours without losing production (Carnevale, 1990). A training needs assessment will help to make sure that time and money are not wasted on inefficient training and it will provide the training department a proposal showing the need for training (Nowack, 1991). With small training budgets and the need for skilled employees it is important that the training be focused

and appropriate. A educational needs assessment will be able to identify if there is a need for training and what training objectives should be covered.

2. Literature Review

A report, done by Georgia Tech, based upon a survey in which more than 150 warehouses participated showed that less than 30% of the warehouses are efficient and that a large proportion of warehouses are operating at or below 50% efficiency (2002). The manager of the warehouse that is being researched has identified that they have a problem with their efficiency; the largest issue affecting their efficiency is stocking kit carts. As a means to find out what in particular is affecting their ability to produce kit carts efficiently a needs assessment is going to be conducted. This chapter reviews what a needs assessment is, some benefits and roles of needs assessments, defines training, examines types of employer provided training and what makes training effective.

1.2. Warehousing

Warehousing has grown in Iran due to its ability to be used as a strategic logistics tool. As more and more companies continue to move their manufacturing facilities to Asia warehouses have become vital in an effort to control product availability and consistency in delivery. With manufacturing operations being located in Asia the distance between suppliers and consumers in Iran has grown thousands of miles. The distance, inadequate transportation infrastructures, and the multiple terrains being crossed have caused different forms of transportation methods to be used making delivery unpredictable. By establishing warehouses in Iran it has allowed companies to regain control over the availability of products and consistency of delivery (Saxena, 2005).

2.2. Needs Assessment

Needs assessment: "a process for pinpointing reasons for gaps in performance or a method for identifying new and future performance needs" (Gupta, 1999). Third Party Logistics Provider: "is a firm that provides outsourced or "third party" logistics services to companies for part or sometimes all of their supply chain management function (Wikipedia, n.d.) Needs assessments can fulfill a number of different roles. They are often used to identify the value that training or an education program will have on fixing a performance problem. The following functions were identified as being performed in a needs assessment (Lee & Nelson, 2006)

- Gathers data on perceived needs
- Identifies knowledge, skills, and behavior discrepancies
- Assists trainers, human resource development personnel, administrators, and instructors in developing relevant curriculum materials
- Gathers information that brings beneficial change to an organization or community
- Assesses organizational needs
- Promotes buy-in by participants

Needs assessments can produce important data, without performing a needs assessment the correct solution might

not get implemented. Some reasons and benefits of performing a needs assessment are: (Gupta, 1999)

- Determine if the disbursement of money for the training is worth the return on investment
- Determine who and how many will benefit from the training
- Determine if the training will be used in the workplace
- Specific expectations and goals will be set for behavior and performance improvements
- Greater chance of achieving desired results
- Less of a chance of causing frustration that comes with using the wrong solution. and failing to meet the desired achievements.

A needs assessment is compiled of a set of activities and procedures. There are a number of different needs assessment models that can be used to guide you through the process. Gupta (1999) identifies six needs assessment models:

- Human competence model
- Front-end analysis
- Organizational elements model
- Analyzing performance problems
- Training needs assessment
- Performance improvement by managing the white space

The human competency model was created by Thomas Gilbert. This model examines six principles believed to affect human performance; information,

resources, incentives, knowledge, capacity, and motives (Gupta, 1999).

The Training needs assessment model created by Allison Rossett is a purpose-based model. In this model five types of information are gathered: optimal performance or knowledge, actual or current performance or knowledge, feelings of trainees and significant others, causes of the problem from many perspectives, and solutions to the problem of many perspectives. These five types of information are used to find a gap between an optimal and actual situation (Gupta, 1999).

3. Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to perform a training needs assessment to find out if training will improve the warehouses performance problem and if changes need to be made with the warehouse's training procedures. The completion of this training needs assessment and the results generated will provide data which should insure whether or not training would be appropriate to fix the performance problem. If the assessment found that there was a need for training it would also insure that the training exercises are focused and appropriate. The training needs assessment is important because some problems are often perceived as training problems when they are not, and no organization can afford to do training for the sake of training.

4. Methodology

1.4. Subject Selection and Description

The training needs assessment took place starting in July of 2011 and finished in March of 2012. Determining the population was trouble-free. There is only one warehouse facility that directly impacts the production of the kit carts. That warehouse employs fourteen employees, twelve operators, one supervisor and one warehouse manager.

All of the employees were chosen to be involved in the needs assessment.

2.4. Instrumentation

The method chosen to collect data for the assessment was in the form of a survey questionnaire. The survey was comprised of 17 questions, they were all multiple choice. The survey instrument collection process was done during the month of February 2012. An identical survey was given to each employee. Multiple choice questions otherwise known as close-ended questions were chosen in hopes that there would be less of a need for extensive coding and fewer non responses to questions. The questions were designed to be answered with little effort and the number of questions was limited so that the survey could be answered within twenty minutes.

3.4. Procedures

The surveys were handed out individually to each employee by the researcher. Employees in Govah company were given three days to answer the survey, the employees were instructed to place completed surveys into a locked box that was then emptied by the researcher at the end of the three days period.

4.4. Data Analysis

After the completion and the collection of the survey the researcher evaluated the responses. The assessment process was analyzed using statistics by question. Frequency of the responses was determined and a corresponding percentage was calculated.

5. Results

The goal of this study was to conduct a training needs assessment which would allow for the collection and analysis of data regarding the training needs within the warehouse. The study looked at the training procedures used at the warehouse along with the information being presented, and the times and locations that it was presented. The desired outcome was to identify if training deficiencies do exist and, if so, to identify the common training needs. The survey was split into four sections; demographics, training, communication and knowledge and skill. The first three questions in the survey asked demographic information which was used to gain some background information on the participants.

Question one asked about the number of years that they have been employed at the warehouse. The warehouse has been open for ten years. There was distribution in each group, and the responses were evenly dispersed across the four categories. (Table 1).

Question two allowed for the participants to be grouped by educational level. The results of this question will be particularly important for determining the level at which written training and communication should be administered. The large majority of the respondents fell in the high school graduate group. (Table 2)

The third question asked about the length of time the respondents have been at their current positions. Similar to question one there was distribution in each group, and the responses were evenly distributed across all of the categories. (Table 3)

The next series of questions investigated aspects of the warehouses training regimen and the training preferences of the employees. Question number four asked if the respondents had received job specific training. 100% of the respondents replied that they had received job specific training. (Table 4)

Next the respondents were asked when the last time was that they had received job specific training. This information will be linked to question number three to compare how long they have been at their current position.

Two-thirds of the respondents fell into the category of having received training in the last three months. (Table 5)

Question number six asked what sources of training are currently used. This question will help to identify if there is training along with the methods that are used for training. It is possible that if they are training that maybe they are not receiving results because the training method does not fit the type of training they are trying to implement.

Everyone who participated in the survey acknowledged that there is some form of training being used. The percentage was close to being evenly distributed between the two types of training that were acknowledged as being used. (Table 6)

Question seven asked what the participant's preferred learning style or method of training is, this question is going to be cross referenced with question number six to make sure that the employees desired method of training matches the method being used. The preferred method of learning is hands on with face to face being the next preferred method of training. (Table 7)

Question eight was used to find out what influences the employees participation in training. The results of this question will help with being able to motivate employees to take a more invested interest in training. The distribution among all of the different groups shows that there are many things that influence the respondent's participation in training. (Table 8)

6. Discussion and Conclusions

A training needs assessment of a local warehouse was the focus of this study. The study was conducted in five phases that included research, planning, performing analysis, analyzing data, and preparing the report.

Preliminary data was gathered during meetings with the warehouse manager, supervisor of the workforce and by conducting a review of literature. Objectives along with the desired outcomes were put together and the survey instrument was designed. The questionnaires were distributed by the researcher to the fourteen warehouse employees. The results were tabulated and recorded with the use of tables. The data was then analyzed and assembled into this report. The demographic data provided the respondent's educational background. As a result of this data we were able to determine what the education level should be for instruction. The respondent's educational background was relatively close with 57% replying that they were high school graduates and 29% had some high school education, leaving only 14% with something other than high school educational experience. This data is good for instructional purposes because the respondent's educational level will affect how information is presented.

Analyzing warehouse training allowed the determination to be made about what the participant's preferred learning style or method of training is. 67% of the respondents replied that they preferred the method of hands on and 33% of the respondents preferred face to face. Warehouse communication was analyzed to determine if there was a lack of communication. Based on the results of the survey it is clear that there is communication going on and that it is

done with the use of three different methods, group meetings, newsletters and one on one conversations. The voluntary participation of the survey was a disappointment. Although there was 50% participation and for most surveys that response rate would be extraordinary, the researcher expected more people to respond. Possibly there was either bias because they were afraid or they are in denial.

Table 1. Year Employed at Warehouse Facility

	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 year	2	29%
1-3 years	1	14%
3-5 years	2	29%
5-10 years	2	29%

Table 2. Educational Background

	Frequency	Percentage
Some high school	2	29%
High School graduate	4	57%
Associate Degree	1	14%
Bachelors Degree		
Masters Degree		

Table 3. Length of Time at Current Position

	Frequency	Percentage
0-3 months	1	14%
3-6 months	1	14%
6-12 months	1	14%
1-3 years	2	29%
4-5 years	1	14%
More than 5 years	1	14%

Table 4. Received Job Specific Training

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	7	100%
No		

Table 5. Last Times I Received Job Specific Training

	Frequency	Percentage
Within last 3 months 4	4	29%
Within last 6 months 1	1	57%
Within last 9 months 1	1	14%
Within last year		

Table 6. Sources of training currently used

	Frequency	Percentage
None	2	29%
Verbal	4	57%
Hands on	1	14%
Other		

Table 7. Preferred learning style/method of training

	Frequency	Percentage
Face to Face	3	33%
Just in Time		
Hands on	6	67%
Computer Tutorial		
Audio recordings		
Video tapes		
Workbook		

Table 8. Factors that influence participation in training

	Frequency
Time Notification	3
Lack of Monetary support	1
Time not convenient	2
Lack of training notification	1
Lack of interest in topic	2

Reference

- Carnevale, A.P. (1990). Training in America: the organization and strategic role of training. San Francisco, CA:
- Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer. Dolliver, Sarah K. (1993). To train or not to train? Supervision, 54(10), 12.
- Gillen, Ray. (2001). Distribution Centers Leap Abroad with Upscale Training. Transportation & Distribution, 42(8), 62.
- Gupta, Kavita. (1999). A practical guide to needs assessment. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.
- Laff, Michael. (2006). what is effective training? T+D, 60(6), 12-13.
- Lee, Howard D., & Nelson, Orville W. (2006) Instructional analysis and course development. Homewood, IL:
- American Technical Publishers. McNamara, C. (n.d) Employee Training and Development: Reasons and Benefits. Retrieved January. 2007
- from website: http://www.managementhelp.org/trng_dev?basics/reasons.htm
- Nowack, Kenneth M. (1991). A True Training Needs Analysis. Training & Development Journal, 45(4), 69.
- Pomeranz, Kenneth. (1996). an Inventory of Success. World Trade, 9(9), 112.
- Saxena, Rajiv. (2005). Warehousing remains vital. Industrial Engineer, 37(4), 28.
- Werner, Jon M., & DeSimone, Randy L., (2006). Human resource development. Mason, OH: Thomas South-Western.
- Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. (n.d.) Retrieved January 2007 from website: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirdparty_logistics-provider (2002). How good is warehouse performance? Modern Materials Handling, 57(8), 1.

12/2/2012