Employee Motivation to Participate in Training and Development Activities: Instructional
Design Variables

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Introduction

"Human resourcing is the key to determining organizational success" (Aziz and Ahmad, 2011, p. 53). To develop those human resources, employers spent over 50 billion dollars on formal training programs in 2009 (Morrell, 2011). The challenge of developing human capital in organizations is answered by many organizations through the process of becoming "learning oriented". Harrison and Kessels (2004) state Tjepkema and Wognums definition of "learning-oriented" organizations as those that "create facilities for employee learning" and "stimulate employees not only to attain new knowledge and skills, but to also acquire skills in the field of learning and problem solving, and thus develop their capacity for future learning"(p. 83). Hurtz (2009) found that the transition to learning orientation is taking place, stating that episodic development interventions are expanding into a more blended approach and a broader idea of development is taking hold. The broadening of development activities and the ever increasing costs associated with implementing interventions demands the investigation of variables influencing the effectiveness of these programs.

Training effectiveness can be evaluated with a variety of formative and summative tools. One of the most well-known evaluation methods is Kirkpatrick's four levels. Kirkpatrick's evaluates on the learner's reaction to the program, whether learning occurred during the program, the change in learner behavior and if the learned behavior produced business results (Kirkpatrick, 1994). This type of summative evaluation can be a great resource but in order to employ evaluation strategies, the workforce has to participate in the activities. It is important for practitioners of human resource development to understand the variables influencing motivation to participate and the actual participation in development activities. Human resource development and more importantly, instructional designers will need to address the modifiable

variables leading to an increase in participation, motivation and learning. If training and development activities will account for motivational variables in the instructional design process then employee motivation to participate will be enhanced.

Problem Statement

Ineffective training and development can lead to lowered motivation levels for employees. This can harm companies by decreasing the effectiveness of training programs and increasing training costs (Aziz and Ahmad, 2011; Morrell and Korsgaard, 2011). Sound instructional design is imperative for quality training and development, which will positively impact employee's motivation level. Therefore this study is needed to examine quality of instructional design and the implications it has on motivation levels.

Purpose Statement

The intent of this study is to explore employee motivation to participate in organizational training and development activities through an improved instructional design process. This study aims to develop strategies to improve learner motivation by identifying the modifiable variables contributing to motivation and incorporating their use into the analysis or pre-development stage of instructional design.

Literature

Variables associated with Motivation

There are a number of researchers investigating the variables that affect motivation to participate and learn and how to predict participation in development activities (Aziz & Ahmad, 2011; Garavan, Carbery, O'Malley and O'Donnell, 2010; Hurtz & Williams, 2009; Morrell & Korsgaard, 2011). Aziz and Ahmad (2011) cite training motivation as the most important

factor when measuring training effectiveness. Through an integrative and comprehensive review of the relevant literature the Aziz and Ahmad draw on relevant research and aim to provide new perspectives and frameworks for stimulating training motivation. The authors provide three variables associated with training effectiveness that are influenced by learner motivation (1) organizational characteristics; (2) individual characteristics and (3) training programs characteristics. The authors focused on training program characteristics as they believe them to be the most modifiable variable associated with training effectiveness and motivation. Individual and organizational characteristics are described to be out of the adaptable control of the organization. Aziz and Ahmad identify six training program characteristics that stimulate training motivation:

1. Voluntary attendance: Participants motivation is positively affected by the option to participate. While this view is supported by many, it is unsupported by Hurtz and Williams (2009) when they concluded "the more voluntary the activities are, the less likely employees are to participate" (p. 651).

2. Training reputation: Motivation is increased when the program is perceived as reputable or of good quality. Morrell and Korsgaard (2011) echo this in their study citing managerial approval and positive social cues of development activities increase motivation to participate.

3. Appropriate training design: Focusing the development activities on the learner, making them active and employing blended techniques contribute to the motivation to participate. Garavan Learning environment characteristics. Garavan, Carbery, O'Malley and O'Donnell (2010) highlight content quality and instructional quality as contributing variables to participation.

4. Relevance to job: Motivation to participate is enhances when employees see usefulness and application to job duties.

5. Career needs: With an eye towards the future of their career, an employee's motivation to participate in increased if the development activities are perceived to stimulate growth in their career.

6. Personal needs: Motivation is positively affected if personal needs like promotion, compensation, personal mastery of content are anticipated.

In direct opposition to Aziz and Ahmad (2011), Morrell and Korsgaard (2011) aim to explore motivation to participate through an investigation of individual and institutional characteristics. Using a person-by-situation approach the authors investigated conscientiousness, social cues and managerial status as it relates to motivation and participation. The authors found that a conscientious employee is more motivated to participate in development activities. The relationship between conscientiousness and motivation was strengthened by positive social cues and favorable managerial opinions of value.

Instructional design to improve motivation

The goal of instructional design (ID) is to make learning more efficient and effective and less difficult. (Kemp, Ross, Kalman & Kemp, 2011) ID Models have been developed to assist in the practice of designing instruction. Allen (2006) asserts there are over 100 different variations of the instructional design model. Almost all of them replicate steps from the popular 'ADDIE' process—analyze, design, develop, implement and evaluate.

The first phase of the popular ADDIE model is the training needs analysis (TNA). TNA is the basis for all training related decisions made by organizations and practitioners (Clarke,

2003). Clarke goes further to state that new TNA model development has been static for decades and recent research around these models does not fully address the theory-practice gap in relation to organizational behavior. Through the analysis of a case study, a political context to the motivations behind conducting TNA's and in interpreting their results is uncovered. Clarke stipulates that popular methods of TNA like self-assessment or manager feedback provide relatively quick results and are linked to motivation to participate. However, the methods can be influenced by positions of power and politics, lending to open interpretation based on the worldview of the interpreter.

Hardre and Miller (2006) promote a new model to enhance motivation in all stages of the instructional design process, not just the TNA. Hardre and Miller maintain the presence of a division between training and motivation. They assert that motivation is a function of human resources and instructional design is a function of the training department. This divide is then responsible for a lack of motivational variables being optimized in instructional design. Their model addresses motivational needs in three stages of design

1.) Pre-intervention: Optimizing the analysis process by exploring the motivational characteristics of a learner, characteristics of the task and context of intervention. This allows an instructional designer to take full advantage of the pre-dispositions of a learner.

2.) During intervention: Designing the intervention to maximize organizational goals and connect the learner to them through instructional activities

3.) Post-intervention: The intervention should allow for future success. Evaluating the learning immediately may give clues to future success or motivation of a learner.

Participation in Development activities

Motivation is just one variable effecting the participation in development activities. As organizations move towards a broader, ongoing and continuous process to develop human capital (Hurtz and Williams, 2009), they move away from traditional development interventions and stimulate a shift towards more self-directed activities. Thus, there is need to explore the factors that encourage employees to participate in these activities. Hurtz and Williams (2009) crafted a multiple-indicator model to test the voluntary participation in employee development activities. To craft the model the authors expanded on the theory of planned behavior (TPB). The authors' model and the TPB both state that participation is directly influenced by the intention to participate. In turn the intention to participate is directly influenced by a learner's attitude towards development activities. Attitudes were also investigated via dispositional variables of (1) learning goal orientation; (2) work centrality; (3) job involvement and (4) conscientiousness.

Hurtz and Williams conducted an initial survey and then a follow up survey three months later to the same population. The authors make several conclusions and suggestions in regards to participation and the intent to participate. Participant knowledge of program availability was the strongest indicator of participation. This means the employees were likely to participate if they were informed of the activities. Intent to participate was closely related to attitudes in this model; improving attitudes directly improved the intention to participate. Reactions to past activities were high on the list of contributors to attitudes towards participation. In opposition of previous research, this model did not strongly correlate perceived control as a contributing factor to participation. This suggests lower participation if development opportunities were categorized as voluntary opportunities.

Hurtz and Williams found no significant correlation between conscientiousness and participation. This is contrary to Morrell and Korsgaard's (2011) findings. Morrell and Korsgaard found that managerial status moderates the level of conscientiousness as it pertains to training participation. This suggests that higher status does not positively affect participation. Morrell and Korsgaard found that favorable opinions of the development material by supervisors suggested an increased motivation to participate. This echoes the findings of Garavan et al (2010).

Focusing on the ever growing field of e-learning, Garavan, Carbery, O'Malley and O'Donnell (2010) investigate the factors that contribute to participation in voluntary e-learning opportunities. Expanding on the work of Hurtz and Williams (2009) the authors investigate several hypotheses in close relation to their model. Their model introduces general person characteristics and instructional design characteristics to directly explain participation in voluntary e-learning activities. Barriers and enablers, self-efficacy and motivation to learn have correlating relationships in the model. General person characteristics are important to this model as it is perceived that e-learning requires more responsibility, independence and self-directedness on the part of the learner. Instructional design characteristics like content quality, instructional quality and feedback and support are keys to participation in voluntary e-learning. Perceived barriers and enablers are moderated by self-efficacy, and instructional design characteristics.

While Hurtz and Williams (2009) equated the intent to participate with actual participation, Garavan et al (2010) distinguished their study by measuring actual participation rather than intent to participate stating "it is a stronger measure of participation" (p. 159). A survey was crafted based on the variables in the model and distributed. The study concludes with three contributions. It expands on the work of Hurtz and Williams (2009); it expands

research on participation and design in e-learning and discovers the importance of motivation to learn in participating in e-learning.

There are multiple variables influencing an employee's motivation to participate and participation in voluntary development activities. While no single author or article addresses a systemic view of the characteristics, the research on motivation as a whole does. The implications of the literature is that training and development programs should focus on three types of variables, the training program characteristics, the organizational characteristics and the individual person characteristics. This study will focus the following variables:

1. Mandatory versus voluntary attendance: A training program characteristic, the decision to make training and development activities mandatory or voluntary is contradicted in the literature.

2. Communication plans around the implementation of training and development activities: A modifiable organizational characteristic that contributes to many motivational variables like training program reputation. Even the best program will suffer in its effectiveness if it is not marketed properly.

3. Learner analysis: Learner characteristics themselves are not modifiable in instructional design. However, the information gathered and its subsequent use is a variable factor. A focus on learning design and designing programs with the learner in mind will directly contribute to the programs reputation and therefore increase participation

Research Questions

The following research questions will be used for this study:

Research question 1: What are the motivation levels of employees participating in organizational

training and development activities?

Research question 2: What instructional design tools are used in current training and

development programs?

Research question 3: Does the type of instructional design tool used impact motivation level of

employees participating in organizational training and development activities?

Hypothesis I: The type of instruction design tool used will impact motivation level of employees

participating in organizational training and development activities.

Research question 4: Can the modification of identified variables impact the motivation level of

employees participating in organizational training and development activities

Hypothesis II: Variables used in instruction design tools will impact motivation level of

employees participating in organizational training and development activities.

Methods

Participants

This study will be conducted in a large academic medical center with over 15,000

employees. This organization was chosen for multiple reasons. There is a large employee pool

to draw a sizable sample of participants. The industry is highly regulated, leading to multiple

training and development initiatives for employees. There are multiple training and development

professionals to draw on serving the large population. The population is diverse in working

environment, education level and experience, hopefully leading to a more diverse pool of

participants. Two key groups with in the medical center will be surveyed or interviewed to

determine the importance of the identified variables. The first group consists of training and

development professionals, those responsible for the initial analysis and implementation of training and development interventions. 10 training and development professionals will be surveyed to collect types of instructional design tools used. The second group consists of learners, those employees responsible for the completion a training program. A survey will be sent to all employees who completed training programs in the previous year. They will be surveyed to measure motivation level.

Instrumentation

A survey and open ended interview will be conducted with the 10 training and development personnel. There will be a general survey to list the types of instructional design tools employed. The interview will feature open ended questions about their adherence to instructional design models and their tools and their opinion of motivation levels and the need to increase motivation. If applicable, the interview will continue with an exploration into the variables leverage to increase motivation. A survey will be developed for the participants. With the exceedingly large audience, the survey will be delivered via the online tool Survey Monkey. The survey will be limited to no more than 25 likert style questions to measure motivational level of employees.

Data Collection

Training and development professionals will be initially contacted via email. Once they have agreed to participate a survey will be distributed and an interview will be scheduled at the participant's convenience. In advance of the interview, an introductory letter will be sent to prepare the training and development professionals for the interview. The letter will give an outline of interview questions to start initiate thought and ideally to spur more meaningful conversation. Employees will be contacted via email through an official internal email from the

Human Resources department this email will outline the confidentiality of responses, estimated time to complete, due date and intended use of the data. Notification coming from an internal source will ideally increase participation rates. Employees will consent to participate in the study by following a link to a Survey Monkey questionnaire. It is estimated that the survey will take no more than 20-30 minutes of time. At the conclusion of one month data collection will cease and analysis will be started. At the two week mark, one reminder will be sent to those employees that have not responded. The employee survey will be sent to over 15,000 employees. Popular research on survey feedback says to expect about a 25% response rate. Larger response rates will not be pursued as employee attitudes may be affected by multiple contact attempts.

Future studies

Future studies and research should be conducted to explore more fully the variables involved when employees do not participate in developmental activities. This would provide a fuller view of motivation variables by focusing an entire study on non-participation. Morrell and Korsgaard (2011) found that participation was reduced in higher managerial positions. An exploration of the higher managerial employee's motivations to not participate would help expand the issue and provide insight into possible solutions. Future research should explore additional variables and expand the research on program design. Another opportunity for research resides in the variables that influence the level of conscientiousness in an employee. As with motivation, conscientiousness plays an important role in the research about participation. Further this particular study should be forwarded into different industries. This is important for two reasons, first an academic medical center is a highly regulated industry and certain expectations of continuing education may influence responses. Second, industries differ in their

level of regulation and continuing education. Further studies may produce industry specific

recommendations to increase the motivation to participate.

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