

Training Motivation: Opinions and implications

Researcher Interview of Diane Chapman, Director, Faculty Development

Amy K. Nelson

North Carolina State University

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Training and development (T & D) activities are of utmost importance when developing the skills of organizational human resources. In 2009 alone, employers spent over 50 billion dollars on formal training programs (Morrell & Korsgaard, 2011). With a significant cost association, organizations look for their T & D programs to be highly effective. Aziz and Ahmad (2011) promote training motivation as the most important factor when measuring training effectiveness. There are multiple variables influencing an employee's motivation to participate and participation in voluntary development activities. Focusing on the motivation piece, the current literature provides research data and recommendations on training program characteristics, individual characteristics and organizational or institutional characteristics (Aziz & Ahmad, 2011; Hurtz & Williams, 2009; Morrell & Korsgaard, 2011). While no single author or article addresses a systemic view of the characteristics, the research on motivation as a whole does.

Through an interview with a practicing researcher in the field of T & D, opinions and implications of motivation and motivational variables are explored. Diane Chapman, Ed.D. was chosen for this interview for her current and past work experience and research interests. She is currently a teaching associate professor and the Director of Faculty Development at North Carolina State University. Dr. Chapman also has over twenty years of experience in T & D in the manufacturing setting. Her research career reaches back with over ten years of experience. Dr. Chapman has conducted research and given presentations on the evaluation of T & D activities (Chapman, 2006; Chapman 2004) the motivation of faculty (Chapman, 2011) and engagement in learning (Chapman, 2009). For a full transcript of the interview, please refer to the appendix.

In the T & D field and especially in highly regulated industries, T & D professionals are faced with an increasing responsibility to train according to regulatory standards. Dr. Chapman outlined a few challenges associated with this situation. First, that training will tend to be driven by numbers rather than quality driven. Second, is that the training will become standardized and will not consider the context of the implementation. How to avoid this ‘check the box’ type of training will be a challenge. Dr. Chapman proposes the collection of qualitative evaluation data in addition to the familiar quantitative type. This may give better feedback to administrators and help provide support for a more quality driven program. Dr. Chapman also recommends including customized training content to better connect it to the organization and avoid a “one size fits all” approach.

As cited in Harrison & Kessels (2004), Tjepkema and Wognums promote a definition of “learning oriented” organizations. Organizations 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). How does regulatory training fit into this model of “learning oriented”? Dr. Chapman noted that there is usually no tie between mandated regulatory training and voluntary development activities. She does believe that there should be, regulatory pieces should be linked into a larger comprehensive training strategy. It is important for employees to see regulatory training as part of professional development not a separate requirement. Dr. Chapman sees the healthcare industry as one that is getting this strategy tie in right, “their models for training have a balanced approach to regulatory and non-regulatory” (Chapman, appendix).

Aziz and Ahmad (2011) identify voluntary attendance as a training program characteristic that positively affects participation. This view is unsupported by the research of

Hurtz and Williams (2009) when they concluded “the more voluntary the activities are, the less likely employees are to participate” (p. 651). Dr. Chapman does not mandate any of her department’s development activities. Even though they struggle with participation she does not believe that mandatory training is the solution. She feels that training reputation and word of mouth is the best way to gain interest in their programs. Better yet, getting leaderships endorsement is a great way to signal the importance of a program and increase attendance.

Dr. Chapman tends to favor a mix of mandatory and voluntary activities. Ideally, to have a foundational standard of training then build with voluntary activities customized to each employee. When queried about what the voluntary versus mandatory debate means, Dr. Chapman was not sure about the effect on T & D activities. “A positive training experience, whether voluntary or mandatory, is still a positive experience” (Chapman, appendix).

One of the main findings from this interview is that training has to fit the learner in order for them to be motivated to participate. Meaning, it does not matter if it is mandated, voluntary, regulatory or developmental. It has to be relevant to the person participating or their personal and professional interests. Another finding is that regulatory training should be weaved into a greater picture of T & D activities as a whole. It should not be off to the side in its own category, it should be an integral important part of T & D activities. This should signal the importance of regulatory training and therefore, increase motivation to participate. Also, T & D activities have to be advertised, these programs will only be successful if employees know when and how to access the activities. Finally, T & D activities must be supported by the administration to motivate learners to participate.

References

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Appendix
Interview Questions & Answers

Name: Diane Chapman, Ed.D.

Title: Director, Office of Faculty Development, NC State University

1. Can you briefly describe your professional and/or research experience in the Training and Development field?

Over 20 year's experience in T&D in large plant manufacturing settings. Did doctoral dissertation on evaluation in T&D. Conducting research in the field for over 10 years. Currently the Director of NC State's Office of Faculty development (responsible for professional development for over 200 faculty members)

2. What do you think are the most important factors to consider when motivating employees to participate in T&D activities?

Job relevance – it needs to be immediately applicable to the participant's job. Next, it has to do with how the training is incentivized. For example, if the employee is rewarded for training, then he or she is more likely to want to attend training. Third, the training needs to have specific objectives that can be obtainable and measurable.

3. Beyond the basic summative evaluation techniques, how do you evaluate whether a training program has been successful?

Depends on the type of training. For more extensive programs, she conducts focus groups at some point after the training to see what was applied and to look at barriers to application. In some cases, conducts retrospective per/post surveys to see how much participants believe they learned.

4. Describe any strategies you may employ or variables you may use to increase employee motivation to participate in T&D activities?

Send out email reminders to inform and motivate – do not barrage people with them. Have a listserv specifically for this. Go to the client. (Many times department heads will request shego to come to them to provide training, which they readily do) Sometimes, give incentives to participate. For example, in their Summer Institute, we take applications and give a small stipend to those who are chosen to participate.

5. What can a practitioner do before the design and development phase to ensure maximum employee motivation?

Find out the potential barriers to attending training. Find out what trainees want from their training. Inform trainees HOW training will help them. Work with the trainee supervisors to reduce barriers to attendance and implementation.

Regulated Organizations--In the T&D field and especially in highly regulated industries T&D professionals are faced with the increasing responsibility to train according to regulatory standards.

6. What are the challenges associated with this type of requirement?

Some challenges include:

- *Training then tends to be numbers driven, rather than quality driven.*
- *Training might be so standardized that it does not consider the context of the implementation.*

7. Are there any solutions you can propose to help meet those challenges?

Collect evaluation data that is qualitative along with the quantitative.

Include topics in the training that help to customize it to the organization rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

8. How do you approach instructional design when your content is highly regulated?

I use subject matter experts and usually have some sort of advisory board that is comprised of people who know the standards along with those who know the context. I do very little regulated training though.

As cited in Harrison & Kessels (2004) Tjepkema and Wognum promote a definition of “learning-oriented” organizations. Organizations 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)

9. How do you tie regulatory training into this model of “learning oriented”

Believes you need to have regulatory training as only one part of the overall training strategy. Show people how the overall strategy and how regulatory fits in. It all has to be tied together strategically to work. If not, the regulatory portion will be seen as something different than professional development.

10. Do you know of any industry or organization getting it right? If not what will it take to incorporate development activities with regulated training activities

Healthcare – particularly nursing and allied health. Their models for training have a balanced approach to regulatory and non-regulatory.

11. Thinking of the relationship between regulatory mandated training and voluntary development activities. Do they interfere or have competing agendas? Do you find that they are integrated into one message of professional development?

Not usually, but they need to be. You cannot have one without the other and both need to be integrated in order to be effective.

Aziz and Ahmad (2011) identify voluntary attendance as a training program characteristic that positively affects participation. This view is unsupported by the research of Hurtz and Williams (2009) when they conclude “the more voluntary the activities are, the less likely employees are to participate” (p. 651).

12. Can you discuss your opinions on the debate of mandatory versus voluntary training?

In current situation, all of the training is voluntary. Struggle to get participation sometimes. This also means that they tend to have many of the same people attending. Mandatory training for university faculty would not work, but if they get one person in a department that has a great experience, they tend to tell others, and increase participation that way. Also, if they can convince a department head or dean of the value of the training, they are likely to get invited to participate in department events, where participation is more of an expectation.

13. Which is optimal for organizational T&D activities?

A mix of voluntary and mandatory is best. Organizations tend to be more effective if there is a foundational standard of training. Beyond that, it should be voluntary and customized to each employee.

14. How does it impact motivation to participate?

Not sure how the debate affects it. It is hard to believe the debate is noticed much outside the field of T&D. A positive training experience, whether voluntary or mandatory, is still a positive experience.