DEVELOPING A SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THAT MOTIVATES EMPLOYEES TO MAXIMIZE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

by

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ABSTRACT

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As America's corporations continue to attempt to maximize their profits, finding the time and resources to train their workforces will most likely become an on-going challenge. One solution is for organizations to rely upon individual employees to assume the responsibility for delivering training and building the needed skills to deliver results. But to do so, employees will need to become more self-directed in undertaking their learning opportunities.

With that in mind, this paper examined one such local organization that requires its employees to possess a high degree of self-direction, but has experienced unfavorable training results. The objective of the research was to gain insight and offer recommendations or solutions to the following five questions:

1. What are the influences upon learning that can affect a training system's results?

2. What are the employees' attitudes towards the current training system?

3. What are the employees' views towards self-directed learning?
4. What are the characteristics and requirements of a positive self-directed learning environment?
5. What motivates employees to be self-directed learners?

The methodology used to arrive at solutions included a survey and literature review of current information. The survey was administered to a single department within this organization seeking their attitudes concerning self-directed learning, learning styles, motivation to learn, and their feelings towards the current learning environment. The survey also contained ten open-ended questions relating to various aspects of the current training environment as a means for the participants to explain their responses.

The findings revealed several possible problem areas within the department's training system. Of greatest concern was the training environment. Employees felt the training process was poor and that management support of the process was questionable. In addition, current training methods did not seem to accommodate different learning styles and supporting training materials were judged as poor.

The results also portrayed a learning profile of the typical employee within this department. As a whole, this group appears to have a strong preference towards self-directed learning. Most want the learning to help make their job easier, want to be financially rewarded, prefer to learn on their own, and must understand why they must know what they are required to learn.

This department could benefit by performing a self-audit aimed at identifying the presence of the characteristics of an effective self-directed learning system discussed in this research. Along with this, a close examination of the survey responses, in particular

the open-ended questions, can be a tool in helping understand the employees' current training attitudes and perhaps, be additional topics of further study.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This field study involves a northeastern Wisconsin company that produces consumer paper products. Many of its employees, age 50-55, with 20 or more years of service, are choosing to leave the company, and in turn are creating a substantial attrition problem. Of course, as these people leave, they also take with them many years of experience and skills.

This attrition has also impacted their training systems. This organization's operating structure is based upon a series of operational, technical and leadership skill blocks. Hourly workers, also called technicians, are awarded blocks according to their chosen career path. Each block has a set of predetermined skills and criteria that must be mastered in order to reach qualification, and in turn, receive a pay increase. The majority of their training is on the job training (OJT) facilitated by a qualified training sponsor. As the number of technicians leaving the company increases, the pool of available skilled resources is also shrinking. Consequently, lesser-experienced technicians are becoming the primary resources in building new skills. This results in the quality and quantity of the information transferred to be inconsistent, in turn, weakening the organization's overall skill base.

Problem Statement

Considering the circumstances just discussed, a major challenge facing this organization's management group is building or replacing lost skills at a faster rate than

attrition can deplete them. This will not be an easy task, since there are many other related issues and problems that have a direct bearing upon skill development.

This paper focuses upon the following problem statement relating to skill development: How does an organization develop a self-directed learning environment where employees are motivated to recognize and take advantage of learning opportunities? This is an especially important issue for several reasons. First, as the organization's training resources dwindle, trainees will have no choice but to look for alternative methods to building the skills needed to deliver their results. In addition, the company's training philosophy is shifting from the current use of classroom learning, to a greater emphasis upon the use of electronic technology. Consequently, this will result in a less structured approach to training, placing more responsibility upon the trainee to plan and build their knowledge and skills. Lastly, staffing levels are at a minimum, and in some cases reduced. Therefore, trainees will no longer have the luxury of having extra staff to cover for training time. Instead, trainees will have to be much more creative in finding training opportunities.

Research Objectives

The objective of this research is to gain insight and offer recommendations or solutions to the following questions:

1. What are the influences upon learning that can affect a training system's results?
2. What are the employees' attitudes towards the current training system?
3. What are the employees' views towards self-directed learning?

4. What are the characteristics and requirements of a positive self-directed learning environment?

5. What motivates employees to be self-directed learners?

Problem Research Significance

Given the staffing and attrition issues stated earlier, this research is significant so as to understand the characteristics of self-directed learning and its ramifications upon training results. Equally important, is that this research uncovers evidence that self-directed learning can also be a training alternative for organization's who are not experiencing the problems discussed earlier. This is important because today's businesses exist in a highly competitive environment where the common goal is to maximize profits using the least resources. Therefore, it is possible an effective self-directed learning environment could support this goal by building skills subsidized by a minimal training budget. With that in mind, the findings of this research may be of interest to any organization seeking cost-effective training alternatives.

Assumptions of the Study

The following assumptions were identified in this study:

1. All contributing participants in this study had a genuine interest in improving their training environment.

2. All participants in this study responded voluntarily and were not under any undue influence in forming their opinions.

3. All participants didn't have ulterior motives or hidden agendas in stating their responses.

Methodology

This research was designed to examine the characteristics of a self-directed learning environment and identify the criteria needed to effectively implement such a program within an organization. Once identified, one department within a local organization was studied for the presence of these criteria. This study was necessary because the organization is undergoing some serious attrition problems. Consequently, these problems have created many training related issues for employees.

The methodology to address this problem began with a literature review of information pertinent to self-directed learning, characteristics of learning and motivation triggers of adult learners. A survey instrument was developed and distributed through company mail to all hourly workers. It was accompanied by a cover letter explaining that participation was totally voluntary. Each participant was given two weeks to return the survey. A follow-up letter was not used, but a reminder was posted by the employee mailbox area. Of the 130 survey forms distributed, 65 were returned resulting in a 50% response rate. The data for this study was collected and analyzed to acquire frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviation.

Limitations of the Study

The following are possible limitations that could occur in this study.

1. Fifty percent of the employees did not respond to the survey, which could affect the validity of the overall results.
2. This study involves just one department of this organization and any results may not be indicative of other departments.
3. This organization has rather stringent hiring requirements. As a result, the education level of their employees may not be typical of other similar organizations in this

industry. Consequently, findings of this study may not be representative of other corporations.

Definitions and Terms

The following are terms and definitions used throughout this study:

Andragogy – A term used to describe the philosophy of adult learning. Malcolm Knowles was the leading authority on the subject and developed a learning model (Knowles, 1984).

Facilitators – The process where instructor's role shifts from one of expert to guide in the learning experience. Facilitators tolerate mistakes, provide feedback and offer challenges for continued improvement (Hatcher, 1997).

Learning Styles - A theory that states learners have specific learning styles chosen upon their visual, auditory and kinesthetic preferences (Hendricks, Holliday, Mobley & Steinbrecher, 1994).

Multiple Intelligences – A theory developed by Howard Gardner that claims all people possess different learning styles, or intelligences. These intelligences include a combination of the following: Logical mathematical, Linguistic, Spatial, Musical, Bodily-kinesthetic, Interpersonal or Intra personal (Buraldi, 1998).

OJT – An abbreviation used to describe On-the-Job Training (World Book Dictionary, 1986).

Pedagogy – A term used to describe the science and art of teaching that emphasizes a systematic method of learning (World Book Dictionary, 1986).

Self-directed Learning (SLD) – A learning environment where students initiate the learning, determine needs, set goals, select strategies and evaluate outcomes (Fisher, No Date).

Self-directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS) – A 56 item Likert scale survey developed by Dr. Lucy Gugliemino to measure the degree of skills and attitudes of people to be self-directing in their learning experiences (Zemke, 1998).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

A learning system contains many variables that can influence its capability. Understanding these influences and their relationships within an organization can have a direct impact upon a system's overall effectiveness. One of the most important of these is the learning characteristics of humans. The initial part of this research focuses on two characteristics of the human learning experience. The first is the identification of some common influences upon the learning experience that can directly affect the performance or desired results of a training initiative. The second part looks at some models of learning theory that explain how humans learn. These models are the foundation and basis for the final section of this literature review, self-directed learning.

Influences Upon Learning

The ultimate goal of any organizational learning experience, whether it is highly structured or one emphasizing self-direction, is to increase the organization's results by improving a trainee's performance. Performance is influenced by five elements. The formula below shows how these influences can affect performance (Fournies, 1987, p. 88).

$$A \frac{(P + T)\, M}{E} = R$$

The "R" represents the results accomplished as a result of performance. The "A" represents the abilities or aptitude of the trainee. It is important to match these abilities to

the performance requested of the employee. For instance, asking a 100-lbs. employee to lift 200 lbs. boxes will not result in a favorable performance result. The "P" is the performance of the duties, tasks, or behaviors required of the employee. Since very few employees can walk in right off the street and perform as desired, "T," or training, must be implemented. An employee could have the aptitude or abilities, know the tasks and how to perform them, but lack the "M," or motivation to perform. There are many factors affecting motivation, such as peer pressure, boredom or low pay. The last piece of the results formula is "E," or external influences. These influences are a by-product of the employee's environment that they have little control over. Faulty equipment, staffing shortages, or insufficient raw materials are examples of external influences that can affect results (Fournies, 1987, p. 89).

How Humans Learn

As a prerequisite to understanding self-directed learning, it is necessary to examine the characteristics of how humans learn. Malcolm Knowles was the pioneer in learning theory research and in his book, Andragogy In Action, introduces two distinct learning models, pedagogy and andragogy.

Most people can relate with his pedagogical model. It is traditionally followed in education and is most likely the only method that learners have experienced. The pedagogical model makes the following five assumptions concerning essential characteristics of a student's learning experience (Knowles, 1984, p.8).

1. A learner is defined as a dependent personality content with assigning to the teacher the full responsibility for making all the decisions concerning the learning experience. This includes what should be learned, how and when it should be learned, and whether it should be learned. The primary role of the learner is to submissively carry out the teacher's directions.

2. Learners enter into an educational activity with very little experience that is of much value as a resource for learning. Therefore, it is the experience of the teacher, textbook writer, or audio-visual aids that become the learning resources.

3. The pedagogical model also states learners become ready to learn when told they have to learn in order to advance to the next grade level. In addition, learning readiness is largely a function of age.

4. The student's orientation to learning is subject-centered; meaning they see learning as a process of acquiring prescribed subject matter content.

5. Learners are motivated primarily by external pressures like parents, teachers, competition for grades, or the consequences of failure.

Knowles' Andragogy is a relatively new learning model that makes some rather contrasting assumptions about an adult's learning experience compared to the pedagogical model. Listed below are the same five learning experience characteristics, but explained using the andragogical model (Knowles, p. 10).

1. Adults are self-directing. By definition, an adult is "One who has arrived at a self-concept of being responsible for one's own life, of being self-directing." Once adult learners arrive at this point, any learning situation where others begin imposing their wills upon them, without their participation, is met with resentment and resistance.

2. Adult learners enter the learning experience with a greater volume and different quality of experience compared to youths. In turn, they have a much larger data base in which to connect learnings to.

3. Adults become ready to learn when they experience a need to know or do something in order to perform more effectively in some part of their lives. Examples would be a job promotion, job loss, divorce, or hobbies.

4. An adult's orientation to learning is more life-centered. Their motivation for learning is triggered primarily by life experiences. Consequently, adults learn in order to be able to perform a task, solve a problem, or to live in a more satisfying way.

5. Motivation for adults is a result of both external and internal motivators. While external motivators, like a better job or pay increases do have an affect,

> the real motivating factors are internal, like self-esteem, recognition or a better quality of life.

Knowles faced criticism from his peers for contrasting adult education methods (andragogy) with typical school education (pedagogy). Most felt this contrast was an oversimplification. Knowles later intellectually admitted as much and made revisions, but continued to be emotionally and practically committed to the distinction he had developed (Jarvis, 1998).

Considering the discussions above, it is apparent that pedagogy and andragogy encompass the philosophies of adult learning. Consequently, it is important both theories are understood and used appropriately, since not all adults and situations dealing with adults, respond equally to just andragogical methodologies. For instance, using pedagogical methodologies in an inappropriate adult learning situation, may result in the student's feeling alienated, intimidated, or leaving the class with something less intellectually than the enlightening educational experience they expected (Billington, Galbraith, as cited in Fisher). This point is reinforced by Pratt, who suggested that many situational variables such as the teacher, learner characteristics and institutional environment can affect the extent learner centered instruction (andragogy) is desired over teacher centered (pedagogy). Some learners may need more direction because they do not have the required basic skills and knowledge. They also may lack confidence and not be totally committed to the learning endeavor (Pratt, as cited in Imel, 1998).

The andragogical and pedagogical philosophies define some personal and environmental conditions necessary to open learner's minds to receiving new information. However, as discussed earlier in Fournies' (1987) performance model, the ability or

aptitude of the learners is also an important element in the learning process. Aptitude is the ability of the learner to internalize and process the information presented to them. Multiple intelligences, a theory developed by Howard Gardner, claims all people possess different learning styles, or intelligences. This differs greatly from the traditional view that only recognized two, verbal and computational (Buraldi, 1998). Gardner's intelligences include the following:

1. Logical Mathematical -the ability to detect patterns, reason deductively, and think logically. This intelligence is usually associated with scientific and mathematical thinking.

2. Linguistic-the mastery of language to express oneself rhetorically or poetically. It also enables people to use and remember information.

3. Spatial-the ability to manipulate and create mental images to solve problems.

4. Musical-the capability to compose musical pitches, tones and rhythms.

5. Bodily-Kinesthetic-the ability to use one's mental abilities to coordinate one's own bodily movements.

6. Interpersonal-the ability to understand the feelings and intentions of others.

7. Intrapersonal-the ability to understand one's own feelings and motivations.

According to Gardner, these seven intelligences are significant to learning in that all people have them, but only develop and utilize a few during their learning experiences. One reason for this is that typically only the verbal and mathematical intelligences have been emphasized in traditional education.

A simpler explanation separates learners into three learning styles-Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic. Visual learners prefer training based upon written material. They prefer written directions and usually seek documentation and a structured training environment. Auditory learners prefer lectures, cassette tapes or materials presented with

music. These people often perform well within discussion groups. Kinesthetic learners prefer hands-on activities. These learners often ignore written materials in favor of repetitive performance as a means in learning (Hendricks, Holliday, Mobley & Steinbrecher, 1994).

Steven Lieb (date unknown), who feels that learning results from the stimulation of the senses, supports the theory that people possess differing learning styles. He states that in some people, one sense is used more than others to learn or recall information. Therefore, instructors should present information that stimulates as many senses as possible to increase the chances of a teaching success.

Self-directed Learning

> The storage time of an individual's knowledge from acquisition to use has shrunk because employees must use the latest knowledge available to keep companies at the edge of the competition. In essence, we have entered the age of "just-in-time learning". This type of learning has been discovered to be self-directed learning. It is the only approach possible for keeping learning in sync with the rapidly changing environment (Gugliemino, 1997 p.1).

The previous quote illustrates the possibilities and importance of self-directed learning. Because it is still a relatively new concept, there is not a definitive definition for the concept. However, most definitions use the basic elements found in Knowles' andragogical model as a means in offering an explanation. These elements include: students initiate the learning; determine needs; set goals for learning; select strategies and evaluate learning outcomes (Fisher, Date unknown). Meizrow (as cited in Fisher) defines self-directed learning as "the capacity of adults for critical self-reflection and for changing their lives". Perhaps Richard Durr, senior manager of Motorola, offers a simpler definition. He describes self-directed learning as a process where learners accept

major responsibility for planning, implementing and evaluating the learning they need (Filipczak, Ganzel, Gordon, Lee, Picard, Stamps, Zemke, 1998).

The definitions above suggest that self-directed learning is a conscience, complicated and drawn out process performed only within a formal educational setting. This is not really so. For example, discovering a shortcut to get to work is a form of self-directed learning, though not as complex a process as a researcher seeking a cure for cancer (Fisher). Interestingly, a study found that 90 percent of all adults conduct at least one self-directed learning project per year and typically involve themselves in five projects, spending an average of 100 hours on each (Tough, as cited in Fisher). Another study reported that in the past year, community college students engaged in an average of seven learning projects, spending 285 hours on each. Of these projects, 56 percent were self-directed (Sheckley, as cited in Fisher).

Most literature on self-directed learning divides the concept into one of two perspectives--process and personality (Oddi, as cited in Fisher).

Process.

A training philosophy and process can only be as effective as the stability of the system's structure supporting it. The environment and the role of the facilitator are two important pieces in building the foundation of a successful system.

Developing a new learning environment may be the biggest challenge in deploying a new training system. Self-directed learning is, in many cases, a new paradigm consisting of new beliefs, thoughts and actions. Trainees, trainers and the organization must learn to adapt, first through understanding, and then by experience (Hatcher, 1997). Self-directed learning should occur within an environment where some

structure is provided by the instructor or institution, yet allows the student the flexibility and freedom to develop as a person (Fisher). In conjunction, support should be provided through an environment that meets both the learner's physical and psychological needs (Imel). One method used to assess an organization's readiness for self-directed learning is with a survey (Fisher).

As discussed earlier, self-directed learning shifts the primary focus from the teacher to the learner. A teacher has traditionally been viewed as an expert. They knew what had to be learned and knew how to teach it. In self-directed learning, the instructor's role changes from expert to facilitator to guide (Hiemstra, Brockett, 1994). Unfortunately, this new role requires the use of different skills and techniques that many instructors are ill equipped to deliver. Some may need to adjust to the additional time facilitation requires. Many may struggle with a feeling of inadequacy and loss of control (Hatcher, 1997). A good facilitator should understand adults as learners, accept a humanistic philosophy, and be able to let go of the traditional view of teacher control (Hiemstra, Brockett, p.72). Facilitators can go a long way in creating a learning environment by tolerating mistakes, providing progress feedback, challenging trainees to go? beyond the norm, and by respecting different learning styles and abilities (Hatcher, 1997).

Critics charge that self-directed learning, and more specifically facilitation, is simply a way for instructors to become less accountable for their own performance. At an extreme, they charge that the classroom could be staffed with instructors who are not content competent, but are excellent interpersonal communicators. As a result, a student

would leave the learning experience feeling good about themselves but lacking the needed knowledge and skills (Fisher).

A self-directed learning process can have different requirements, depending upon the organization and its respective learning environment. The focus of this research involves an industrial environment, therefore an examination of a study by Constance C. Blackwood (Hiemstra, Brockett) is befitting. Blackwood looked at the requirements for self-directed learning programs in industries that mandated trainees to acquire specific education and training. In some respects, the very notion of mandated training would appear to be contrary to self-directed teachings. However, he found the following eleven steps to be a successful strategy in implementing a self-directed system within programs such as this.

1. Educate management to help them interpret mandated training as liberally as possible so that the educational need is met in the most cost-effective way. Emphasize the optimization of learning and the efficiency of self-directed learning principles.

2. Involve workers by using strategies that include them. Place workers on curriculum committees to review regulations and define requirements.

3. Get to know the audience by surveying the workforce using specific questions.

4. Incorporate audience feedback into the training plan. If workers lack the skills to be self-directed, help them acquire them.

5. Obtain learner support by reviewing training plans with workers and supervisors. Answer questions and negotiate changes.

6. Demand consistent facilitation. This means being honest, available and not wavering from pre-set parameters.

7. Use contracts and plans at the beginning of each learning experience. These plans should include checklists, procedures, end goals or objectives, and adequate materials.

8. Motivate workers by helping them to see the benefits to their learning. These can be for both monetary or for personal gain.

9. Incorporate alternative learning methods to give learners choices. Some examples include: reading, video, one-on-one mentoring, test-out, or resource centers. Materials must be available upon demand and have a method to check them out. The material should be so readily accessible that a learner will look something up because it is within easy reach. Training and resource centers should be open and staffed.

10. Build the infrastructure by understanding what the training requirements are and set the parameters accordingly. Attain a place that is safe within an appropriate environment. Build a base of topics and gather the resource material. Expect facilitators to take train-the-trainer courses and to learn as much as possible about both the topics and adult learning.

11. Evaluate the learning experience. If a mandated test is used, teach to the test. Allow learners to have a voice in the type of evaluation chosen.

Motorola successfully implemented a self-directed program in 1993. Richard Durr was hired to integrate self-directed learning (SDL) concepts into the company's learning processes. Durr followed a model developed by Paul and Lucy Guglielmino, professors at Florida Atlantic University. The following is a brief explanation of the steps he followed (Gugliemino, 1997).

1. Identify learning needs.

2. Evaluate the SDL readiness of employees. The Self-Directed Learning Readiness scale was used.

3. Orient and motivate employees for SDL. Use group meetings to explain the principles and philosophies.

4. Develop employee learning objectives that are useful to them individually.

5. The training director develops or obtains pertinent learning resources.

6. Learners select times to work on short and long term objectives.

7. Training director develops a system for evaluation and results.

Personality.

The second major component of a self-directed learning program is understanding what learner personality characteristics are necessary to enable learners to effectively function within the system. Malcolm Knowles (1975) developed a matrix illustrating the personality differences between learners involved in teacher-directed learning versus self-directed learning.

Table 1

Personality Differences Between Learners in Teacher-Directed Versus Self-Directed Learning

CHARACTERISTIC	TEACHER-DIRECTED	SELF-DIRECTED
Learner self-concept	Dependent personality	Increasingly self-directed
Role of learner's experience	To be built upon more than used	A rich resource for learning
Readiness to learn	Varies with level of maturation	Develops from life's tasks and problems
Orientation to learning	Subject-centered	Task or problem-centered
Motivation	External rewards and punishments	Internal incentives, curiosity

One method to measure the ability of learners to be self-directing is with a survey called the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS). Lucy Guglielmino, a professor at Florida Atlantic University, has been studying this scale since 1977. During that time, a strong correlation has been found between SDLRS scores and management success. Generally speaking, the better the score, the higher a person climbs up the management hierarchy (Zemke, 1998).

The SDLRS is a 58 item Likert scale survey that measures the degree to which participants perceive themselves as having skills and attitudes associated with self-directed learning. This scale has been widely accepted and used by adult educators. While there has been some disagreement among experts about the specific attributes the scale really measures, ultimately the SDLRS is considered an appropriate tool to use (Kreber, 1998).

Self-direction Benefits

Self-directed learning has benefits for both the learner and the organization. A study in the September, 1998 issue of Training magazine, reported that workers who say they have some input into the training they receive are half again as likely to label themselves very satisfied at work (Schaaf, 1998). A paper, written by D.D. Billingham, (Fisher) found that :

> Environments where non-authoritarian, self-directed learning was evident, there were significant indications of ego development among students. This, then, sets in motion the energy with which self-direction begins to perpetuate itself. Individuals gain confidence in their ability to learn, which in turn tends to drive them to experience additional learning situations, which they might otherwise have avoided, or even considered impossible. The whole person develops.

There are substantial benefits to the organization as well. Consider the Motorola example discussed earlier. Their implementation of a self-directed learning approach solved three important issues. First, is that training could be done when it is most needed by the trainee; second, more training could be done in the same time frame using this method; and third, the training could be done at a lower cost. In 1995, 1,920 learning plans were completed at Motorola, which accounted for about 40% of their course offerings. The average cost for delivering the traditional classroom offerings amounted to $13.34. In contrast, the average for the self-directed material was $7.76. In addition, it is interesting that learning results indicated that the self-directed approach proved as good as, if not better than, the traditional method (Guglielmino).

Durr also found that at Motorola's Boynton Beach plant it took one year to reach the breakeven point to cover the initial $360,000 cost of starting the learning lab. Thereafter, the savings of SDL over traditional learning for the most recent year by quarters were 9%, 12%, 10%, and 18% (Guglielmino).

Overcoming Resistance

Throughout this research, reference has been made to the relative newness of self-directed learning. This research has also shown that self-directed learning is not a passing trend or new fad. However, as with any approach that deviates from the norm, resistance is sure to surface. Usually this resistance can be traced back to some myths and misunderstandings. Ralph G. Brockett has identified ten myths associated with self-direction (Hiemstra, Brockett, pp.6-10).

Myth #1: Self-directness is an all or nothing concept.

Myth #2: Self-direction implies learning in isolation.

Myth #3: Self-direction is just another fad.

Myth #4: Self-direction is not worth the time required to make it work.

Myth #5: Self directed learning activities are limited primarily to reading and writing.

Myth #6: Facilitating self-direction is an easy way out for teachers.

Myth #7: Self-directed learning is limited primarily to those settings where freedom and democracy prevail.

Myth #8: Self-direction in learning is limited primarily to white, middle-class adults.

Myth #9: Self-directed learning will erode the quality of institutional programs.

Myth # 10: Self-directed learning is the best approach for adults.

Brockett goes on to say that self-direction resistance usually permeates from the learners, facilitators, and from the institution's policies, practices, and attitudes. He offers the following strategies for overcoming resistance in these areas.

Resistance from learners usually stems from their self-concept or self-awareness. Because of this, many learners lack the confidence to take on a high degree of responsibility for their learning. Also, previous experiences may lead the learner to believe that the teacher-directed approach is the only way learning can occur. Strategies to overcome these beliefs include: self-reflection, interviewing techniques that enable individuals to learn from each other, journal writing, learning contracts and receiving feedback from multiple sources.

It is not surprising that teachers are also a source of self-direction resistance. Many see self-direction as a threat to their authority and view its very concepts counter to what they have traditionally believed to be the appropriate philosophy in education.

Brockett suggests educators use the following strategies to help them overcome their reluctance:

1. Teach learners to be self-reflective
2. Develop rewards and recognition for self-directed learning
3. Provide guidelines for organizing and conducting self-directed learning
4. Use technology for advisement and learner feedback
5. Help learners learn how to investigate options, opportunities and resources
6. Help learners match strengths with interests
7. Help learners with learning plan development
8. Help learners develop good technical learning skills
9. Help learners enhance their sense of well-being
10. Help learners develop confidence and skill in taking control of the elements of the teaching-learning transaction (needs assessment, goal-setting, self-evaluation).

Institutional change is often difficult, and when it does occur, is often very slow. Brockett states that institutions present some of the most formidable barriers to self-direction. A major strategy to overcome these is to have those responsible for developing policy begin to think about new and different ways of viewing their organization. An example is Senge's notion of the "learning organization" (1991) that places high value in the human resources of the organization.

The following chapter will discuss the methodology used to assess the characteristics of self-directed learning within an organization.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine how an organization can develop a self-directed learning environment motivating employees to recognize and take advantage of learning opportunities. Of equal importance, is to assess the organization for evidence of the requirements needed to implement such a program. Therefore, this chapter will discuss the research design, describe the population participating in the survey, define the survey instrument, explain the procedures to collect data and discuss data analysis procedures.

Research Design

This research was designed to examine the characteristics of a self-directed learning environment and identify the criteria needed to effectively implement such a program within an organization. This study was needed due to the serious attrition problems experienced by a local organization. Consequently, this has resulted in many training related issues for employees.

One method used to analyze this problem included a literature review of the following: information pertinent to self-directed learning, characteristics of learning and motivation triggers of adult learners. Also, a survey instrument was developed and distributed to all hourly workers seeking their voluntary responses to questions relating to

these topics. The intent of the survey was to uncover the employees' learning characteristics and understand the current learning environment.

Description of the Population

A review of internal documents of the organization revealed the following about the population: The subjects of this study include 84 men and 46 women, all belonging to the same production department. The average age of the population is 39.6 years, with the youngest being 23 and the oldest 56. The population's average years of service with the organization is 11.3 years, with the high being 35 and the low 6 months. In addition, this organization uses what is called a high performance work system consisting of nine pay levels. The average pay level attained is 4.8.

Survey Instrument

The intent of the survey was to uncover the following information about the population described above:

1. Do employees possess the needed characteristics to be self-directed learners?
2. How do employees feel about the current training system and environment?
3. What motivates employees to learn?
4. What are the learning styles of employees?

The methodology used to gather the information is explained in the following discussion of the survey instrument.

The survey instrument (Appendix 1) contained 29 questions, which were tied to a Likert Scale system of scoring. The questions were developed specifically to collect data on each of the research questions stated earlier.

Questions 1-4 were classification questions inquiring as to age, years of service with the company, educational level and current level within the work system. The remainder of the survey was divided into four research areas: Questions 5-10 inquire as to the individual respondents characteristics towards self-directed learning; Questions 11-14 uncover learning styles; Questions 15-19 investigates learner motivation; and questions 19-29 examine the learning environment. Questions 19-29 also each contain spaces for open-ended comments. The intent of this was to gather supporting information as to the rationale behind the responses given for these questions.

Procedures

The survey questionnaire (Appendix 1) was distributed to all employees of one department of the organization studied. Each survey was accompanied by a cover letter (Appendix 2) explaining the intent of the survey and stating an assurance of the confidentiality of all responses. Because of the voluntary nature of the survey, this researcher did not anticipate any resistance to participation, and none occurred. Management was asked for their support of this effort before any collection procedures began. The Human Resource Manager, Department Manager and Area Manager all supported the survey effort. One hundred thirty surveys were distributed with the cover letter that requested a two week return date. After one week, a reminder notice was hung by the employee mailbox area. A total of 65 surveys were returned, or 50%.

Data Analysis

The data for this study was analyzed to obtain frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviations. The analysis of this data is summarized as the findings in the following chapter.

Summary

This research was designed to examine the characteristics of a self-directed learning environment and identify the criteria needed to effectively implement such a program within an organization. This was of significant importance to a local organization experiencing major attrition problems. Because of these problems, management was being forced to examine the feasibility of alternative training methods. With that in mind, this study investigated the characteristics of self-directed learning and administered a survey instrument to measure these characteristics within this organization. The data gathered from the survey was analyzed and the results are presented in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

This chapter will discuss the findings of the research study. A survey, developed by this researcher, was administered to one department within a large manufacturing organization in northeastern Wisconsin. The resulting analyzed data is reported in the sections to follow.

Report of Findings

The findings in this study were based upon the survey responses provided by employees of one department of an organization. The survey instrument contained 29 total questions, of which, four were classification, six inquired as to the participant's current characteristics of self-directed learning, four identified learning styles, five investigated learner motivation and ten questions assessed the learning environment.

The following charts categorize the survey responses by age, years in the department and work level. Each chart category expresses the total in the population, the number responding in the population and the resulting percent value.

Education level was also a classification question, however, data was not available as to the education level of the overall population. The education level of those responding included twenty nine employees with at least twelve years, twenty four with 13-14 years, seven with 15-16, and one with 17 years plus. Four employees chose not to respond to this question.

Figure 1 one illustrates the number of respondents according to age group. The 30-39 group is the largest age group at 52 employees. Twenty nine chose to respond

resulting in a 52% percent response rate. This was followed closely by the 22 employees of the 40-49 age group (22%). The 18-29 age group had the best response rate at 80%, however, it must be noted that this group equals only ten people, or 8% of the total population.

Figure 1

Survey Responses by Age

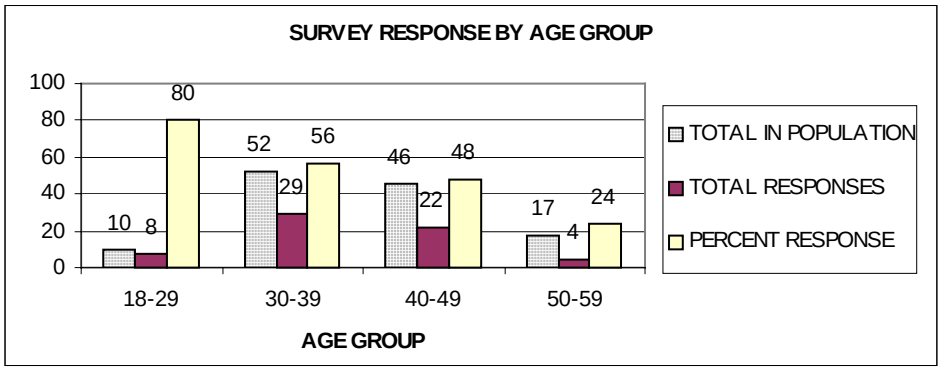


Figure 2 displays the number of employees responding according to their years in the department. The largest numbers, both in numbers and percentages, came from the 0-5 and 6-10 age groups. Thirty four of 47 employees with 0-5 years in the department responded. This calculated to 72%. The 6-10 year group closely followed this, where 19 of 44 (43%) employees participated in the survey. The 11-15 year group had an impressive response rate with 66%, however this is a very small group with only three employees.

Figure 2

Survey Responses by Years in Department

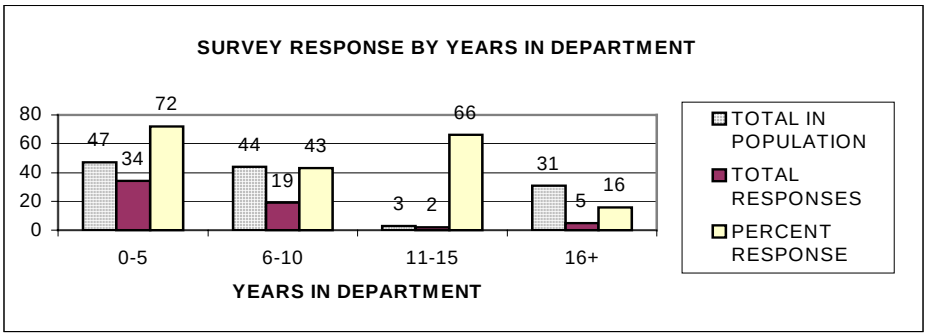
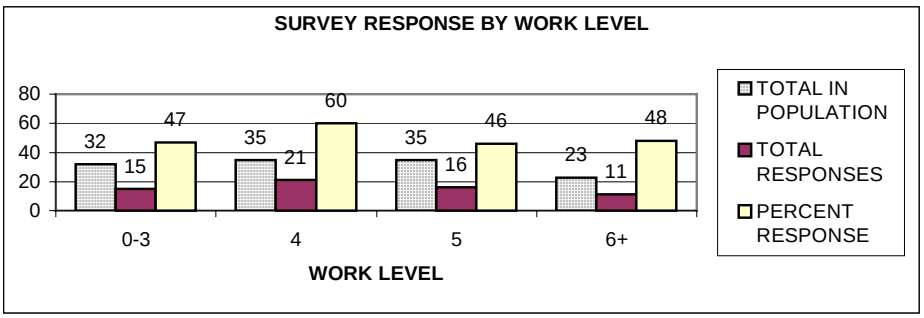


Figure 3 indicates the number of employees responding according to their work level. Response rates were relatively equal across the board. The largest was by employees who have reached level 4 in the work system. Of the 35 total employees, 21 responded, equaling a 60% response rate. The three other groups' response rates were virtually equal. Sixteen of 35 level five employees (46%) responded. Fifteen of 32 level 0-2 employees (47%) participated. Lastly, 11 of 23 level six and greater employees (48%) also responded.

Figure 3

Survey Responses by Work Level



The remaining survey questions utilized an evaluation rating scale of: Strongly Agree (5 points), Somewhat Agree (4 points), Neither Agree nor Disagree (3 points), Somewhat Agree (2 points) and Strongly Disagree (1 point). The findings are grouped into survey sections and are presented in the following tables consisting of frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations.

Current Characteristics of Self-Directed Learning

The participants were asked six questions pertaining to characteristics of self-directed learning. The intent was to determine the degree to which these characteristics were present in this population. The questions inquired as to the respondent's preferences to the following: working on their own, planned learning, lifelong learning, having a voice in planning learning, work related learning and learning if the expectations are clearly communicated. Each of these elements is explained in greater detail in Tables 1-6.

The first question asked employees if they preferred to learn on their own if they receive minimal help (see Table 1). The results indicated that 43% of the employees somewhat disagreed, with over 18% strongly disagreeing. Twenty-three percent had no preference, 9% somewhat agreed and only 1.5% preferred to learn on their own. The mean for this question was 2.37.

Table 2

Prefer To Learn On My Own

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	12	18.5
Somewhat Disagree	28	43.1
Neither Agree or Disagree	15	23.1
Somewhat Agree	9	13.8
Strongly Agree	1	1.5

Mean = 2.37 Standard Deviation = .993

Employees were asked their preference for participating in learning that is planned out for them and required only their attendance (see Table 2). Over 33% had no feelings either way on this issue, 28% somewhat agreed and about 8% strongly agreed this to be their preference. Fifteen (23%) employees disagreed to this approach and 5 (7.7%) strongly disagreed. The mean for this issue was 3.05.

Table 3

Like Learning Planned Out Requiring Only Attendance

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	5	7.7
Somewhat Disagree	15	23.1
Neither Agree or Disagree	22	33.8
Somewhat Agree	18	27.7
Strongly Agree	5	7.7

Mean = 3.05 Standard Deviation = 1.067

Table 3 illustrates the employee's views on learning throughout life. An overwhelming 77% strongly agreed and 17% agreed they planned on learning throughout life. Only 4 people (6%) had no opinion, with none disagreeing. The mean for this question was 4.70.

Table 4

Continue Learning My Entire Life

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Somewhat Disagree	0	0
Neither Agree or Disagree	4	6.2
Somewhat Agree	11	16.9
Strongly Agree	50	76.9

Mean = 4.70 Standard Deviation = .579

Sixty-two total employees (41 strongly agree and 21 agree) or 95%, felt it was important that they have a say in the planning of their learning (see Table 4). Only three people had no opinion and none disagreed. The mean for this issue was 4.59.

Table 5

Like To Have A Say In Planning Learning

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Somewhat Disagree	0	0
Neither Agree or Disagree	3	4.6
Somewhat Agree	21	32.3
Strongly Agree	41	63.1

Mean = 4.59 Standard Deviation = .583

The employees were asked if they would learn something only if it pertained to their job (see Table 5). The majority disagreed with this question, 24 (37%) strongly disagreeing and 22 (33.8%) disagreeing. Fourteen (22%) had no opinion and only 5 employees disagreed at all. The mean for this question computed to 2.03.

Table 6

Will Only Learn If Required Of My Job

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100}
Strongly Disagree	24	36.9
Somewhat Disagree	22	33.8
Neither Agree or Disagree	14	21.5
Somewhat Agree	3	4.6
Strongly Agree	2	3.1

Mean = 2.03 Standard Deviation = 1.03

The last self-directed learning question posed to the employees inquired as to their ability to learn on their own, if the learning expectations is clearly communicated. Table 6 shows that 75% of the employees agreed they are capable of learning in this situation, with 30 (46%) employees somewhat agreeing and 19 (29%) strongly agreeing. Ten (15%) had no opinion and 6 (9%) disagreed with this question. The mean for the responses was 3.94.

Table 7

Capable Of Learning If Expectations Are Communicated

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	1	1.5
Somewhat Disagree	5	7.7
Neither Agree or Disagree	10	15.4
Somewhat Agree	30	46.2
Strongly Agree	19	29.2

Mean = 3.94 Standard Deviation = .950

Learning Styles

The next group of survey questions related to the four learning styles known to be common to most people. The intent was to determine the employees' preferences toward learning from books, lectures, discussions or hands-on experience.

Table 7 shows that 26 (40%) somewhat disagreed and 8 (12%) strongly disagreed that they learn better by getting information from a book. Twenty-two (33%) had no opinion on this learning style. Only 9 (14%) agreed that this was their preference. The mean for this style was 2.49.

Table 8

Learn Better From A Book

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	8	12.3
Somewhat Disagree	26	40
Neither Agree or Disagree	22	33.8
Somewhat Agree	9	13.8
Strongly Agree	0	0

Mean = 2.49 Standard Deviation = .866

Employees were asked if they felt they learned best by listening to lectures. A little over half of the respondents felt this was not their preference, with 45% somewhat disagreeing and 17% strongly disagreeing (see Table 8). About 31% had no opinion and only 5 (8%) of the 65 employees preferred this type of learning. The mean computed to be 2.29.

Table 9

Learn From Lectures

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	11	16.9
Somewhat Disagree	29	44.6
Neither Agree or Disagree	20	30.8
Somewhat Agree	5	7.7
Strongly Agree	0	0

Mean = 2.29 Standard Deviation = .843

The last two questions in this section asked participants their learning preferences pertaining to participating in discussions and hands-on experience. 43% (28) somewhat agreed and 9% (6) of the employees strongly agreed they preferred to learn through discussions (see Table 9). In contrast, 9% (6) somewhat disagreed and 2% (1) strongly disagreed with this style. A large number, 37%, had no opinion at all. The mean for this item was 3.49.

Learning through hands-on reported to be the overwhelming favorite, with 53 (82%) respondents strongly agreeing and 8 (12%) somewhat agreeing (see Table 10). Three employees had no opinion and only one strongly disagreed. The mean value for hands-on learning was 4.72.

Table 10

Learn By Participating In Discussions

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	1	1.5
Somewhat Disagree	6	9.2
Neither Agree or Disagree	24	36.9
Somewhat Agree	28	43.1
Strongly Agree	6	9.2
Mean = 3.49	Standard Deviation = .850	

Table 11

Learn Through Hands-on

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	1	1.5
Somewhat Disagree	0	0
Neither Agree or Disagree	3	4.6
Somewhat Agree	8	12.3
Strongly Agree	53	81.5
Mean = 4.72	Standard Deviation = .696	

Motivations to Learn

The survey contained a series of five questions relating to what motivates people to learn. Participants were asked their opinions on the following learning motivators: pay increase, personal satisfaction, making a job easier, understanding the benefit, and recognition.

The first motivator examined was that of pay increase. Table 11 shows this to be an important motivator, with over 56 of the 65 respondents agreeing- 31 (48%) strongly agreeing and 23 (35%) agreeing. Eight (12%) employees had no opinion and only three (5%) somewhat disagreed. The mean response for pay as a motivator was 4.26.

Table 12

Pay Increase

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Somewhat Disagree	3	4.6
Neither Agree or Disagree	8	12.3
Somewhat Agree	23	35.4
Strongly Agree	31	47.7

Mean = 4.26 Standard Deviation = .853

Similar to pay, personal satisfaction received high scores as a motivating influence. Sixty of the 65 responses were of the agree choices, 35 (54%) strongly

agreeing and 25 (39%) somewhat agreeing (see Table 12). Only 4 (6%) had no opinion and one employee somewhat disagreed. The mean for this motivator was 4.45.

Table 13

Personal Satisfaction

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Somewhat Disagree	1	1.5
Neither Agree or Disagree	4	6.2
Somewhat Agree	25	38.5
Strongly Agree	35	53.8

Mean = 4.45 Standard Deviation = .685

Table 13 shows that a clear majority of the employees are willing to learn if it makes their job easier. Interestingly, no disagree responses were given and only 4 (6%) had no opinion. In contrast, 44 (68%) employees strongly agreed and 17 (26%) somewhat agreed. The mean was 4.61

Table 14

Makes My Job Easier

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Somewhat Disagree	0	0
Neither Agree or Disagree	4	6.2
Somewhat Agree	17	26.2
Strongly Agree	44	67.7

Mean = 4.61 Standard Deviation = .604

Table 14 reveals that most employees agree that they prefer to understand the benefit of the learning, before embarking on a learning experience. 29 (45%) employees somewhat agreed and 19 (29%) strongly agreed. A large number of employees had no opinion, with 15 (23%) neither agreeing or disagreeing. Only two (3%) employees disagreed in any form. The mean for this motivator was 4.00.

Table 15

Understand The Benefit

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Somewhat Disagree	2	3.1
Neither Agree or Disagree	15	23.1
Somewhat Agree	29	44.6
Strongly Agree	19	29.2

Mean = 4.00 Standard Deviation = .810

Considering the employees' responses illustrated in Table 15, recognition does not appear to be a major motivation in learning. Almost half, 30 (46%) employees, had no opinion on this issue. In addition, nine (14%) somewhat disagreed and four (6%) strongly disagreed that recognition was a motivation for learning. Only 22 agreed in some form, with 12 (19%) somewhat agreeing and 10 (15%) strongly agreeing. The mean calculated to be 3.23.

Table 16

Recognition

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	4	6.2
Somewhat Disagree	9	13.8
Neither Agree or Disagree	30	46.2
Somewhat Agree	12	18.5
Strongly Agree	10	15.4

Mean = 3.23 Standard Deviation = 1.072

Training Environment

The last group of survey questions pertained to the employees' training environment as it relates to the requirements previously discussed for self-directed learning. The ten questions developed sought the employees' perceptions on the following issues:

- Adequacy of training time
- Applicability of training materials
- Opportunities for hands-on opportunities
- Opportunities to engage in discussions
- Quality of management support
- Presentation of learning materials in relation to learning style
- Communication of learning expectations
- Communication of need for learning

- Effectiveness of training system
- Opportunities to participate in training planning

The first survey question asked employees if they felt they are given adequate time to learn the skills required of them. The largest number of responses recorded were 30 (46%) employees who (see Table 16). Only 3 (5%) respondents strongly agreed. The remainder of the responses were evenly distributed among the remaining choices. Twelve (19%) had no opinion and 10 (15%) employees each somewhat or strongly agreed. The mean for this issue was 3.09.

Table 17

Adequate Time To Learn Skills

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	10	15.4
Somewhat Disagree	10	15.4
Neither Agree or Disagree	12	18.5
Somewhat Agree	30	46.2
Strongly Agree	3	4.6

Mean = 3.09

The employees were then asked their opinion on whether the training materials are satisfactory to support the information they need to learn. Twenty-three (35%) somewhat disagreed and 7 (11%) strongly disagreed with the training materials appropriateness (see Table17). Nineteen (29%) employees had no opinion and only 16 of

the 65 employees agreed in some form, 15 (23%) somewhat and 1 (2%) strongly, that the training materials were adequate. The mean calculated to be 2.69.

Table 18

Training Materials Adequate

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	7	10.8
Somewhat Disagree	23	35.4
Neither Agree or Disagree	19	29.2
Somewhat Agree	15	23.1
Strongly Agree	1	1.5

Mean = 2.69 Standard Deviation = .999

Almost half the employees felt they were given adequate hands-on opportunities to learn the skills they need, with 28 (43%) somewhat agreeing and four (6%) strongly agreeing (see Table 18). Twelve (19%) people had no opinion and 21 agreed, with 12 (19%) somewhat and 9 (14%) strongly agreeing. The mean for this issue was 3.09.

Table 19

Adequate Hands-on Opportunities

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	9	13.8
Somewhat Disagree	12	18.5
Neither Agree or Disagree	12	18.5
Somewhat Agree	28	43.1
Strongly Agree	4	6.2

Mean = 3.09 Standard Deviation = 1.195

A combined total of 39 of the 65 employees surveyed disagreed that they have ample opportunities to engage in lectures or discussions to learn the skills they need (see Table 19). Fifteen employees (23%) had no opinion on this matter and only 11 of the 65 disagreed, however none strongly. The mean for this issue was 2.42.

Table 20

Time To Engage In Lectures And Discussions

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	10	15.4
Somewhat Disagree	29	44.6
Neither Agree or Disagree	15	23.1
Somewhat Agree	11	16.9
Strongly Agree	0	0

Mean = 2.42 Standard Deviation = .950

An overwhelming majority of the employees, 47 (73%), disagreed that management supports training in their department (see Table 20). In contrast, only five (8%) employees responded positively and 13 had no opinion. The mean calculated to be 2.11.

Table 21

Management Supports Training

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	16	24.6
Somewhat Disagree	31	47.7
Neither Agree or Disagree	13	20
Somewhat Agree	5	7.7
Strongly Agree	0	0

Mean = 2.11 Standard Deviation = .868

Employees were asked their opinion on the whether their training materials are presented in a way that is easiest for them to learn. The largest group of responses (40) had no opinion on this issue (see Table 21). A total of 29 (45%) employees disagreed, feeling training materials were not adequate for their needs. In contrast, only 10 employees responded positively, answering somewhat agree. A large number of employees, 26 (40%), had no opinion. The mean response was 2.65.

Table 22

Training Material Presentation

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	4	6.2
Somewhat Disagree	25	38.5
Neither Agree or Disagree	26	40
Somewhat Agree	10	15.4
Strongly Agree	0	0

Mean = 2.65 Standard Deviation = .818

The next two questions asked if the learning expectations are clearly communicated and if employees understand why they need the information they are required to learn. Just about half (32) of the 65 employees disagreed that learning expectations are clearly communicated (see Table 22). Only 13 (20%) agreed and 19 had no opinion. The mean was 2.63 for this item.

In contrast to the above question, the majority of the employees (35) agreed that they understand why they need to know the information they must learn (see Table 23). Only 13 of the 65 people disagreed with this issue and 17 had no opinion. The mean was 3.36.

Table 23

Learning Expectations Communicated

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	5	7.7
Somewhat Disagree	27	41.5
Neither Agree or Disagree	19	29.2
Somewhat Agree	13	20
Strongly Agree	0	0
Missing	1	1.5

Mean = 2.63 Standard Deviation = .900

Table 24

Understand Why I Need To Know The Information

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	2	3.1
Somewhat Disagree	11	16.9
Neither Agree or Disagree	17	26.2
Somewhat Agree	30	46.2
Strongly Agree	5	7.7

Mean = 3.36 Standard Deviation = .963

The employees were asked their views on the effectiveness of the training process in building skills in their department. A clear majority, 30 (62%), felt the process was

not effective (see Table 24). Fourteen (22%) had no opinion and only 11 employees agreed. The mean calculated to be 2.39.

Table 25

Training Process Effectiveness

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	12	18.5
Somewhat Disagree	28	43.1
Neither Agree or Disagree	14	21.5
Somewhat Agree	10	15.4
Strongly Agree	1	1.5

Mean = 2.39 Standard Deviation = 1.011

The last question on the survey asked if the employees felt they were given sufficient opportunities to participate in the planning of their training. Most disagreed, with 27 (42%) somewhat disagreeing and 8 (12%) strongly disagreeing (see Table 25). Interestingly, only three of 65 people agreed. The mean for this issue was 2.53.

Table 26

Opportunities To Plan Training

VALUE	FREQUENCY (n = 65)	PERCENTAGE (100)
Strongly Disagree	8	12.3
Somewhat Disagree	27	41.5
Neither Agree or Disagree	18	27.7
Somewhat Agree	9	13.8
Strongly Agree	2	3.1
Missing	1	1.5

Mean = 2.53 Standard Deviation = .922

Open-ended Responses

Questions 20-29 of the survey were opened-ended questions allowing employees to comment on each issue. The following is a brief overview of the responses given for each question. A detailed listing of all responses is included in Appendix 2.

Twelve of the 65 employees responded to “I am given adequate time to learn the skills I need.” The general feeling of the group was that they are not given adequate time. Much of this was attributed to staffing issues and the pressure exerted by management for technicians to qualify to fill needed skills.

Most of the thirteen of 65 people who responded to, “Training materials are satisfactory to support the information I need to learn,” felt the materials were old, outdated and not accurate. Several felt the type and content of the material was also not adequate

Of all questions, “I am given adequate hands-on opportunities for me to learn the skills I need,” received the most responses. Fourteen of 65 employees commented, with the majority feeling hands-on opportunities were lacking. The reasons given for this were attributed to staffing, time availability, and conflicting team or department priorities.

Eleven of 65 employees chose to respond to, “I have ample opportunities to engage in lectures or discussions for me to learn the skills I need.” Again, employees felt there was not adequate time available and staffing issues were given as the primary reason.

Question #20 asked if the employees felt management supported training in their department. Thirteen of 65 people responded and presented various viewpoints. Most felt training is not supported due to other priorities such as cost savings, reliability, and selective training. No respondents felt management supports training.

Ten of 65 employees responded to the question, “Training materials are presented in a way that is easiest for me to learn.” Responses varied, with some feeling the training materials were outdated or non-existent, to the materials are getting better but hands-on is better than book smarts.

The question, “Learning expectations are clearly communicated to me,” drew only six of a possible 65 responses. Employees felt that expectations are not communicated, were often inconsistent, and there was excessive testing.

Question #23 asked if the employees understood why they need to know the information that they are required to learn. Seven of 65 employees chose to respond. Several felt much of the required information was unnecessary or inconsistent. Others felt information requirements were excessive.

Thirteen of 65 employees responded to the question "I feel the training process in the department is effective to build the skills I need." No one commented favorably about the process. The most common responses were that no process exists, lack of models, lack of time and staff, and employees feel pushed through the system.

The last open-ended question asked if the employees felt they were given sufficient opportunities to participate in the planning of their training. Again, there were no affirmative responses given. As in other questions, staffing was given as a major reason for lack of opportunities. Several also felt inconsistent training priorities limited their participation.

Summary

This chapter discussed the findings of a survey administered to 130 employees of one department of an organization. The survey instrument was developed by this researcher to measure the employees' characteristics towards self-directed learning, learning styles, learner motivations, and to examine the learning environment. The survey also contained spaces for open-ended comments encouraging the respondents to offer additional information on each issue. The participants were given two weeks to complete and return the survey. Survey distribution and collection were accomplished using inter-departmental mail. The summary, conclusions, and recommendations for this study are presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter will summarize the research study and offer conclusions and recommendations based upon the findings discussed in Chapter Four.

Summary

This study involves a consumer paper products company that is experiencing serious attrition problems. Many employees, age 50-55, with twenty or more years of service, are choosing to leave the company. In turn, these same employees are also taking with them many years of experience and skills. As a result, the company is struggling to build and replace these skills at a faster rate then attrition can deplete them. Adding to this problem, is that staffing is at a minimum, and in many cases at a reduced level. Another factor in this problem is that the organization has shifted its training philosophy from the current use of classroom learning, to a greater emphasis upon electronic technology. Consequently, training will become less structured, placing more responsibility upon each individual trainee to plan and develop the skills they need.

Considering the above, it was clear self-directed learning would become an important component in meeting the organization's training requirements. The research began with a literature review of current information on self-directed learning, influences upon learning and motivation factors. The review was followed by the implementation of a survey instrument developed by this researcher. The survey was distributed to 130

employees in one department of this organization. The survey was designed to uncover the following information about the population:

1. Do employees possess the needed characteristics to be self-directed learners?
2. How do employees feel about the current training system and environment?
3. What motivates employees to learn?
4. What are the learning styles of employees?
5. The employees views of the current training environment.

The ten, likert scale questions based upon the training environment, also contained spaces for open-ended responses to enable employees to explain there response or offer additional information. Exactly 65 (50%) employees responded to the survey, and of that 65, 14 (22%) chose to add comments to the open-ended questions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The objectives of this research focused upon the following five areas:

1. The influences upon learning that can affect a training system's results.
2. The characteristics and requirements of a positive self-directed learning environment.
3. Factors that motivate employees to be self-directed learners
4. The employees' current characteristics of self-directed learning
5. The employees' attitude toward the current training system

As a means to fulfill these objectives, the findings uncovered from this study are explained in the following pages.

Objective 1: Influences upon learning that affect a training system's results.

The literature regarding influences upon learning discussed the five elements of performance, the andragogical model of adult learning, and the theory of learning styles, or intelligences.

Fournies (1987) stated that the goal of learning experiences within an organization is to improve performance. In turn, performance is influenced by five elements: the abilities or aptitude of the trainee, the desired behaviors of the trainee, the training implemented, the motivation to perform, and the existence of external influences. Consequently, all these elements must be accounted for to achieve training results.

Knowles' (1984) andragogical model discussed how humans learn, but more specifically, adults. He found adult learners tend to be self-directing, enter the learning experience with a greater wealth of knowledge than youths, become ready to learn when they experience a need to know to improve their lives, are motivated by life experiences, and lastly, their motivation is driven by internal factors. While most people agreed with the model, some critics countered that self-direction is not for everyone. For instance, Pratt claimed that variables such as the teacher, unique learner characteristics and the environment could affect the effectiveness of self-direction.

The literature also examined a learning style theory developed by Gardner (Buraldi, 1998). He discovered all people have different learning styles, or intelligences. While common theory recognizes two intelligences, Gardner felt there were seven: logical mathematical, linguistic, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Gardner emphasized that humans will develop and regularly use only a few of these.

Lieb (Date unknown) agreed with and supported the learning style theory. He felt that since people tend to use one intelligence more than others, instructors should present information in a manner that stimulates as many intelligences as possible.

This researcher recommends the responses to the survey's open-ended questions be closely examined to gain an appreciation of what influences are currently affecting this department's training results. Judging by the responses given, it would appear training materials are less than adequate, hands-on learning opportunities are limited, and time for lecture or discussions are inadequate

All the influences upon learning were discussed in great detail in Chapter 2 and would be very helpful to anyone trying to implement a self-directed learning program or just to improve human performance. This information can also be helpful as reference for future studies, or as a study in itself.

Objective 2: Characteristics and requirements of a positive self-directed learning environment.

Self-directed learning is best described as a learning method where students initiate the learning, determine needs, set learning goals, select strategies, and evaluate outcomes. The literature revealed that a self-directed learning program consists of two areas, process and personality.

The self-directed learning process relies upon the environment and the role of facilitators to be the foundation of a successful system. As stated by Fisher (Date Unknown), the environment should provide some structure by the instructor or institution, but be flexible enough to allow the learner to develop as a person. To encourage this, teachers who were previously viewed as "experts," must change roles to become facilitators, or guides.

Constance Blackwood (1994) discovered the following eleven steps important to successfully implementing a self-directed learning program:

1. Educate management to help them interpret mandated training so it is met in the most cost-effective way.
2. Include workers using strategies that include them.
3. Get to know the workforce through surveys.
4. Incorporate worker feedback into the training plan.
5. Obtain worker support by reviewing training plans with workers and supervisors.
6. Demand consistent facilitation.
7. Use contracts and plans at the beginning of all learning experiences.
8. Motivate workers by helping them to see the benefits to their learning.
9. Give learners choices by using alternative learning methods.
10. Build training infrastructure by understanding the training requirements and setting parameters accordingly.
11. Evaluate the learning experience.

The second part of a self-directed learning program relates to the personality characteristics necessary to enable learners to effectively function within the system. Knowles' matrix illustrated that self-directed learners tend to become even increasingly self-directed. Many of these people developed this self-directed philosophy because of life's tasks and problems. In addition, these people are task or problem-centered and have a general curiosity towards learning.

One method to measure the characteristics above is the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale developed by Lucy Guglielmino (1997). While somewhat controversial about what the 58-question, likert scale is really measuring, it is still widely used by adult educators (Kreber, 1998).

It is recommended that the training process in this organization be audited for the existence of the self-directed requirements discussed above. It is important this audit also consider the responses given to the open-ended survey questions relating to the training process, planning of training, and the training environment. These questions offer additional clues as to the current health of training in this department.

Objective 3: Factors that motivate employees to be self-directed learners.

Compared to other theories, Knolls' andragogical model discusses some rather contrasting assumptions about what motivates adults to learn. He defines adults as people who are responsible for their life, including their learning experiences. Adults are motivated to learn in order to become more effective in some part of their life. Often these are triggered by life experiences like solving problems, improving lifestyles, or improving performance. Knowles claimed motivation to do this can come from both external and internal influences. For instance, increased pay, or a better job are examples of external motivators. However, he felt the real motivating factors are driven by internal influences. These can include increased self-esteem, recognition, or the need to understand the benefit of the learning experience.

The survey instrument contained five questions based upon the motivating influences discussed above. The population was surveyed to determine which of the following were motivating influences: pay increase, personal satisfaction, if it makes their job easier, if they understand the benefit, or recognition.

Results indicated that the biggest motivating influence for this group was if the learning made their job easier. An overwhelming 94% agreed that this was important to

them. Personal satisfaction was given almost equal importance, with 93% responding positively. Somewhat surprising to this researcher, was that only 83% of the population felt pay was a strong motivator to learn. Although fourth in priority, still 74% of the population felt understanding the benefit of the learning experience was important to them. The least of the motivating influences was recognition. Only 34% of the group felt this motivated them to undertake a learning experience.

Considering the findings above, it seems clear that these employees feel strongly that their learning experiences must help make their job easier, as well as be personally satisfying. In addition, most want to be rewarded financially and prefer to understand how the learning experience will benefit them. The vast majority are not influenced by any recognition the learning may bring.

Objective 4: Employees' current characteristics of self-directed learning.

Lucy Guglielmino (1997), of Florida Atlantic University, developed a survey in 1977 that measures the self-directed learning readiness of the participants. Since that time, this survey has been administered many times and has become widely accepted by adult educators. While her scale contained 56 questions, this study's survey only contained six questions covering similar characteristics.

Considering the large percentage of positive responses, it would appear this population has a strong preference toward self-directed learning. Results revealed that learning is important to this group, since 94% say they plan on learning their entire life. In addition, 95% want to have a say in planning their learning, while only 36% want their learning experience planned for them, requiring only that they attend. This group (92%) will undertake learning even if it is not required of their job. Eighty four percent said they

prefer to learn on their own, and 75% felt they could do so if the expectations are communicated.

Objective 5: The employees' attitude towards the current training system.

Ten of the thirty survey questions were devoted to uncovering information regarding the current training environment. Three of these questions focused upon how the training environment accommodates different learning styles. Another three questions were intended to discover if self-direction was encouraged within the department. The last four questions focused upon the quality of training materials, adequacy of training time, management support of training, and the effectiveness of training systems.

The data suggests the training environment does not adequately accommodate different learning styles. Only 17% of the respondents felt they had ample opportunities to engage in lectures or discussions to learn the skills they needed. Training materials also seemed to be a deterrent to many survey participants. Only 15% felt they were presented in a way that was easiest for them to learn, however it is important to consider that 40% had no opinion on this issue. Lastly, of all the learning styles, hands-on was given the highest marks, although even this was not given an overwhelming endorsement. Nearly 50% of the employees felt hands-on opportunities were adequate to build the skills required of them. Although again, these results must be tempered by the fact 31% of the population also disagreed.

Three survey questions were devoted to discovering if the training environment currently encourages trainees to be self-directed. The results indicated the environment to be somewhat positive in several areas key to building an effective self-directed program.

For instance, 54% of the employees agreed that they are given sufficient opportunities to participate in the planning of their training. This finding is supported by the fact only 17% disagreed with this statement. In addition, a slight majority (54%) understand why they need to know the information they must learn. This finding too is supported by the fact only 20% disagreed. However, employees (50%) did not feel learning expectations are clearly communicated.

The last part of the survey focused upon the training materials, amount of training time, management support, and effectiveness of the training systems. No doubt, an important learning prerequisite to is to have effective training materials that support the required training. Unfortunately, this appears to be a shortcoming within this environment, since less than half (46%) felt they were adequate. Employees expressed only a slightly better opinion (51% agreeing) on the adequacy of time allotted them to learn the skills they need.

The two remaining training environmental aspects, training process and management support, did not receive high marks either. Employees strongly disagreed (62%) that the training process in the department was effective in building the skills needed. Views on management fared even worse, with a large majority of employees (73%) disagreeing that management supports training in the department.

The responses to the open-ended questions support the findings discussed above. Therefore, it is recommended that the opinions expressed regarding management support, communication of learning expectations and the effectiveness of the training process within the department be closely examined. This examination could offer possible solutions or be the motivation for additional studies.

In summary, the objectives of this research have created a learning profile of both the environment and its population. As a whole, the training environment does encourage self-direction. However, several shortcomings were identified that can impact the successful implementation of a self-directed learning program. Inadequate training materials, limited hands-on opportunities, and insufficient lecture and discussion times were all cited as influences that negatively affect the learning experience. In addition, the learning environment does not appear to accommodate different learning styles, nor is the training process effective or supported by management.

The profile also illustrates many facts regarding the population. As a whole, it seems this group has a strong preference to being self-directed in their learning experiences. They feel learning is important and want to continue throughout their lives. They want to have a say in planning their learning, prefer to learn on their own, and can do so if the expectations are clearly communicated. This population is motivated to learn if it makes their job easier, is personally satisfying, financially rewarding, and if the benefit is understood.

Creating a self-directed learning environment is a complex process that requires an understanding of many aspects of both the organization, and its employees. Taking a closer look at the items discussed above, along with the characteristics of a positive self-directed learning environment discussed in this paper, will increase the likelihood of a successful implementation.

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APPENDIX 1

Survey Instrument and Cover Letter

I am working on a special project and I need your help. I am asking that you please take the time to read and respond to the attached sheets. I certainly realize the demands upon your time, but this should only take about ten minutes and the information gathered will be very useful. Your participation is very important to the success of this project. Please complete by June 14th and place in Annette Thome's or Jeff Judkins' mailbox. Thanks much and I appreciate the help.

Jeff Judkins

QUESTIONNAIRE

The questions contained within will ask you for your reactions of training in this department. Please answer the questions as truthfully as possible. Do not spend too much time on any one item. In most cases, your first reaction will be the most accurate. All individual responses will be strictly confidential and only the accumulated results will be made public. Thank you for your participation.

1.	My age is:	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59
2.	The number of years in this department:	0-5	6-10	11-15	16+
3.	Grade level completed:	12	13-14	15-16	17+
4.	Current work system level	0-3	4	5	6+

After reading the question, circle the number to the right that most closely expresses how you feel about the statement.

		STRONGLY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
5.	I prefer to learn mostly on my own with minimal help.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I like it when any learning I may need is planned out for me and I just need to attend.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I want to continue learning my entire life.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I like to have a say in planning my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I will only learn something if it required of my job.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I feel I am capable of learning something on my own if the learning expectations are clearly communicated.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I learn better by getting the needed information from a book.	1	2	3	4	5

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
12. I learn best by listening to lectures.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I prefer to learn by participating in discussions.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I learn best through hands-on experience.	1	2	3	4	5

Rate how you feel the following help motivate you to learn.

15. A pay increase	1	2	3	4	5
16. Personal satisfaction.	1	2	3	4	5
17. If it will make my job easier.	1	2	3	4	5
18. When I understand the benefit to me.	1	2	3	4	5
19. The recognition I will receive.	1	2	3	4	5

Circle the number that most closely represents how you feel about how training is conducted in your department. You may add additional information on the lines below each question if you choose.

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
20. I am given adequate time to learn the skills I need.	1	2	3	4	5

_____
_____
_____

21. Training materials are satisfactory to support the information I need to learn.	1	2	3	4	5

_____
_____
_____

22. I am given adequate Hands-on opportunities for me to learn the skills I need.	1	2	3	4	5

_____
_____
_____

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
23. I have ample opportunities to engage in lectures or discussions for me to learn the skills I need.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I feel management supports training in our department.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Training materials are presented in a way that is easiest for me to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Learning expectations are clearly communicated to me.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I understand why I need to know the information I must learn.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I feel the training process in the department is effective to build the skills I need.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I feel I am given sufficient opportunities to participate in the planning of my training.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX 2

Open Ended Responses of Survey Questions 16-25

16. I am given adequate time to learn the skills I need.

"Some people take longer than others."

"Depends on the needs of the dept.-if you are short of people you don't always get enough time."

"I learn quick and would like to advance to other areas sooner than what's possible."

"Not sure yet."

"I trained myself on most parts of the line."

"You are given some time-but pressure is put on you by management as well as technicians to "hurry & qualify" techs because the sooner your qualified the sooner they can train, management they just want bodies to fill spots that say qualified on paper."

"I am allowed to train only after the skill block has an urgent need. Not enough looking to the future."

"There is never enough time, because we are so short staffed."

"There is no training in BTY."

"I am denied time to train."

"Yes, if I want to learn."

"Depends on the block, on line not much of a problem, off line may be a problem."

17. Training materials are satisfactory to support the information I need to learn.

"On the knowledge checks a lot of terminology is different on the tests than on the floor—gets confusing."

"If they are updated."

"If you don't understand the equipment books won't help much."

"Haven't gotten any training materials."

"No training materials to date teach the personality of a line. Observation best training method, not preoccupation of paperwork, 5-S and AM paperwork. Let a person train in peace."

"But I have not gone through the new wrapper material yet."

"We need up to date precise book video or computer disc training & problems situations that need solving so we can learn from this & be more useful on the line & able to have everyone at the same levels as far as how things work & what are the effects of what happens when something is done to the line."

"Some are being updated-but a lot of it is old."

"The training materials teach the basics, but it is up to the individual to decide how to use them."

"Need more up to date material to learn from."

"What training material."

"Old & outdated."

"There is more info available than there used to be, but not all of it is correct or relevant to the skill level I'm training at."

18. I am given adequate Hands-on opportunities for me to learn the skills I need.

"Hard to get off the line to train—1 day here and there just doesn't cut it."

"Only if we have enough people."

"All depends on who you are and who your trainer is."

"Could definitely use more."

"Reliability determines time allowed for hands-on training. A little less PR now can increase PR for years to come."

"But there is a strong tendencies of the more experienced operators to want to push people aside and make all of the adjustments. To a point people are to worried about line efficiency and don't look for more opportunity to plug the new people in more often."

"There are always some things that are done or happen so rarely they are explained But by not repeating you lose site of them & how to handle it if you see it."

"For the most part sometimes your pushed from one block to the next without a full understanding of the first block."

"Have not experienced a better way."

"Due to time this is not possible at times."

"Reliability to important to some teams, they can be to afraid to let someone new do hands-on!!! Depending on teams!"

"If your not pushed out of the way. Because your not moving fast enough for someone."

"No."

"Same as above."

19. I have ample opportunities to engage in lectures or discussions for me to learn the skills I need.

"If they have enough people."

"Hard to get time off the line."

"Only if reliability dictates the time is there for you to attend."

"No coverage available."

"Once again, not enough time because of staffing shortages."

"Usually not enough people on line to support leaving for extended periods ie. 24 Hrs."

"We feel that sometimes our input isn't always used."

"Not enough people to cover to go to lectures."

"Never enough staffing."

"Not now, lack of staffing."

"If this means talking with other techs, then yes. If it means outside of the department than there is no telling."

20. I feel management supports training in our department.

"What they say and do are a lot of times different."

"I feel management supports running the line first even w/o adequate skills."

"Varies from person to person."

"If they supported it they wouldn't have held up skill block awarding on A-crew."

"I believe they are more concerned about filling the mins. Not once have I had a line manager come up to me to see how training was going."

"There is selective training to certain individuals first."

"I feel they do to a point-but mostly they want spots filled, to cut down on OT etc. When new equipment comes in, everyone who's going to be running it should be trained-not just a few selected people."

"For some skills-but I realize the dept. has training priorities-no problem."

"They could care less!!"

"Not right now-cost savings more important."

"Reliability # 1???"

"Only those they think they need-----Materials."

"Seems like management likes for us to train for long periods cause then they don't have to give up the pay even though we are doing the job. So yes, they support being in training, just not letting us complete it."

21. Training materials are presented in a way that is easiest for me to learn.

"Getting better."

"Training system is a mess. The only ones that should qualify a tech on anything is their team. They have to deal with the results. How does charts and graphs during demo & management meetings qualify anyone. Have a little faith in your employees."

"You give a knowledge check that 90% of it is not on the check off list when learning a block. Also please make material applicable to be used on regular basis. Knowledge is O.K. if one can apply it on the line to make the line work better."

"Most books are outdated but bedroll training in small groups was helpful. We need

more of this."

"Some of the training manuals are so old & outdated you get more confused by reading them then actually being helped."

"Getting better."

"Hands on w/ good operators build better skills than book smarts do."

"What training material??"

"Not many training materials—up to date anyway."

"Yup, there is material and I have learned from it as much as I've learned from any other material, hands on works better for me."

22. Learning expectations are clearly communicated to me.

"Tests are getting out of hand—you should be tested on what you do every day not something you might have done once or something you saw in a book but never did it-when you get asked things that you never had come up it makes you feel stupid."

"Still unclear about relief skills or mastery of skill on all lines to qualify. Ex: wrappers."

"I don't really feel there are set expectations-It seems to me people learn what they want, some only want to learn enough to get by (very basic) while others have a drive of their own to learn more."

"Heck no!"

"We are kind of at our own pace."

"No they aren't, not till ready to demo. Then if they need my block everything goes right through. If not then I learn what new and higher hurdles I need to jump."

23. I understand why I need to know the information I must learn.

"Training checklist don't match up with the knowledge checks. I don't get enough info on what and why I need to learn what I need to know."

"Info not necessary. Team can tell when someone knows what they are doing because the work load gets lighter and everything is done faster."

"Why do need to know the internal parts of a glue gun? If it is bad the whole unit is replaced. This is overkill and absolutely useless to know. Are we in the business of teaching useless knowledge to slow one down from getting a pay raise?"

"Some of the things we need to learn are never used again."

"Except for assessments??"

"Just to qualify."

"Sure, nobody wants in depth OP so add parts of it to basic. Not enough M-2s so add some of that to basic op blocks."

24. I feel the training process in the department is effective to build the skills I need.

"There is no process."

"Needs to be a better training system."

"Unaware of the training process."

"More training models needed to show people by teammates what needs to be done without causing downtime."

"So many skills have been lost from attrition that people do their best to teach you but there are still things lost in the learning."

"I think most people are "pushed" through blocks because the dept. is so short of certain skills-you learn enough to get by as "qualified" yet have a whole lot left to learn. They push so you can be used."

"Not enough time and not enough skilled people to do proper training."

"Need to build more troubleshooting skills and the other "little things" that you need to operate that you can never learn from a book."

"You only learn what info people are willing to give up, or what they know."

"But not enough time or resources for me to get off the line."

"Need more hands-on in most cases qualified trainers would also help."

"Only to get to minimum profile."

"No, they go beyond that to what management & the training staff think they should be. Use to be only needed to know 80% of what was on the check to get the block. Now if the block doesn't need to be filled or you don't work days then you need a degree before you start getting paid for the block."

25. I feel I am given sufficient opportunities to participate in the planning of my training.

"When you start training on a block I think you should stay on the job rather than 1 or 2 days a month. I know with the shortage of people it's hard to get training, but now with so many people leaving it's gonna hurt the dept. The best training out there is the older people with the knowledge."

"Haven't had a level (pay) change in 10 years."

"All skills learned so far have been learned from other techs while running".

"It is controlled by the people ahead of you, your admins, and management".

"Train when there is coverage".

"To a point-your very limited-because if you have to go outside the department there is no coverage (unless you are in the category of the "few elite" who seem to make there own schedules. Also most people I feel don't know all the training that is available."

"Opportunities for skill blocks keep changing. I am not given a chance to change my mind."

"No opportunity at present (that's fine w/ me) because skill block awarding is not a priority."

"I can't get any training."

"Staffing is always too short!"

"When the team can support it."

"None, why would I want to take a test, that isn't suppose to count against me (Ya Right) that takes an hour and longer to do. Then there is the problem of managers not being consistent. One manager might want a lot more than the next or different things even though the techs involved are working on the same block. Here is a problem I didn't know where to enter. It has to do with managers not being considerate to the techs. This is when they are scheduled to meet with us and don't show. They will do this several times in some cases. If we miss anything with them

we hear about it, but not the other way around. Training for a block should be like a path that you are given a map for. You can see how to get to point B from point A. You can see this before starting down the path. Then, when you get to point B, you are done. You have walked your path. Others may have a different path to point B, but there maps as maps before, don't change. No one should get to B and find out there is a C and then after getting to C find a D ect. That is my opinion on the training system in this department. Please excuse my spelling. I didn't have my dictionary with me."