



UNIT-5



Staff Training Solutions

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Assess the benefits of training and its needs.
- ✓ Develop a Training Programme

Unit 5

Training and Development

In the hospitality industry, training and staff development play an important role in the work setting. Many branded hospitality retailers understand that staff training is the key business technique that affects service quality, customer satisfaction, profitability, and sales growth.

It is the responsibility of all employers to ensure that employees are given safe work environments with co-workers who comprehend safe working techniques. Likewise, employers are required to ensure that employees carry out their jobs hygienically and handle food in a way that reduces the risks to customers.

Training has to go beyond the basic legal requirements. The training of every employee has a direct effect on how the business functions. New research for the Hospitality Training Foundation indicates that training yields:

- improvements in productivity;
- improved sales per transaction;
- reduced wastage;
- lower levels of staff turnover;
- improved service quality;
- improved customer satisfaction;
- improved employee satisfaction; and
- increased employee flexibility.

Apart from the direct benefits of training, it is vital to understand that failure to train employees will incur its own costs. If you allow new workers to learn through trial and error, there will be many errors. This will lead to problems in service quality, employee dissatisfaction, more wages, lower productivity, and less employee flexibility.

All training should begin with clear communication of the objectives and purposes of what is to be achieved from the training sessions. Use a systematic method that concentrates clearly on the requirements of the person being trained, the required material and the way in which the training is to be evaluated.

The Benefits of Training

Estimating training benefits - especially in the circumstances of potential contributions to the improved business performance – is obviously difficult to achieve. This is not surprising considering the range of training types undertaken within the hospitality industry and the fact that other variables affect training activities, such as the quality and duration of the training programme.

There are clearly many influences on the business performance of an establishment, such as:

- economic climate;
- levels of investment;
- marketing and promotional activities.

The major benefits of training are as follows:

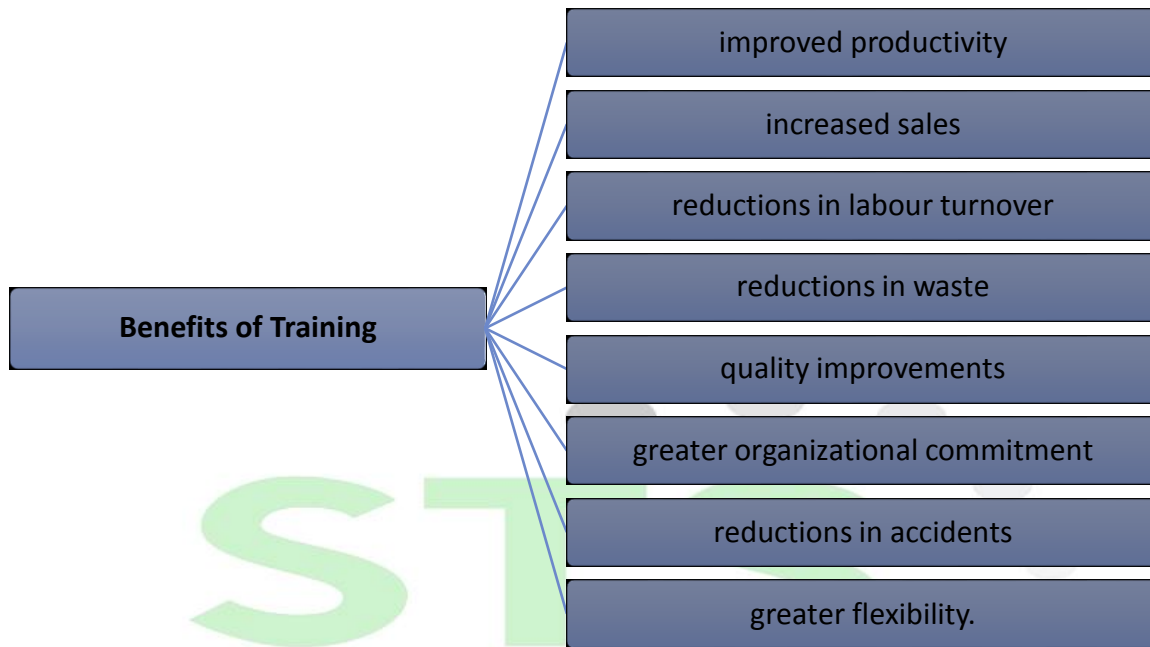


Fig. 5.1

When thinking of the purposes and goals of the training programme, it is vital to keep in mind that training:

- primarily changes individual behaviour, and changes in behaviour directly improve employee performance
- improves employee performance, which can lead to certain financial benefits such as lower costs, more sales, and higher profits.

Identifying Training Needs

The recognition of training requirements normally flows from the staff appraisal process. You will mainly be trying to pinpoint the knowledge, work skills and social skills that the workers will need for both their current and future jobs.

A number of areas have to be considered:

- where the individual performance is not up to the required standard;
- where the identified business goals require all staff to be trained to be more effective – for example, to improve productivity or to increase up-selling;
- new staff requiring induction training;
- when planned changes need new skills or knowledge; and
- when individuals or teams will be changing jobs in the future and training will lead to personal development.

It is beneficial to think of the types of jobs. List them and then think of the relationships between them.

1. Consider flexibility; to what extent is it beneficial to have workers specialise in the various departments?
2. Does specialisation lead to rigidities in the workforce? Is it desirable to train staff to be functionally flexible, rendering them employable in different roles?

After completing a list of job types, produce a list of duties that have to be performed in each job. This procedure of making up job descriptions helps clarify your thinking about the range of tasks that need to be carried out and, flowing from this, the knowledge, skills and social skills required to carry them out.

Now compare individual workers' performance against the needs of the jobs as required now and in the future.

- ✓ Think of the changes required now and in future due to expansion, new equipment, new products, or new services.
- ✓ Consider the personal development of current employees and the consequences of training and development and further education.

Collate all the training requirements you have acknowledged and place them in order of priority, keeping in mind their value, the unit's goals, and the ease with which they can be implemented. In certain situations, short training sessions in a quiet period might be highly beneficial for focusing on problems.

Compare and contrast training and resource requirements against those that are available. Clearly, you may be able to call upon surplus resources and previous investment in building a base of staff or managers who have been 'trained to train.' These will help provide a better resource base. Furthermore, the greater the number of people who are trained to provide training to others, the fewer restrictions on offering training.

The Training Plan

The plan of action is born out of the identification of training needs and priorities. You must decide whether an identified need should be met immediately, bearing in mind the discussion about the cost incurred by failing to train workers; you must think of the implications of putting off the delivery of an identified training requirement.

While a written plan of action might appear formal, it is an investment in time that pays off:

1. Establish the timescale of the plan. You can develop a broad plan spread over twelve months, but there might also be short-term goals – for example, to increase average sales per transaction. A realistic target helps to evaluate the training;
2. Chart the required resources and those that are available to meet your goals; budget for them – bearing in mind that you have to make them work;
3. Being over-ambitious is pointless. Be matter-of-fact. Even if there are more identified training activities than you are able to resource, do not try to do everything. Begin with what is achievable;
4. Work out the numbers that need to be trained and the varying targets to meet;
5. Do not forget to include induction training and the training requirements of new staff. In places where staff turnover is high, or where new recruits are hired for a forthcoming busy period, you must allocate time for their training;
6. Next to every item on the training plan, ascertain where, when, how, and by whom the training will be conducted;
7. If possible, set dates for the training events;
8. Devise a way of monitoring and evaluating the process – is the training effective?

Carry Out the Training Programme

You may identify a variety of training needs in your unit. Some of them will be geared to all your staff, while others will apply to specific groups. In other situations, you may wish to just train individuals.

- In certain situations, the training sessions may be short, lasting only about 20 minutes;
- In other circumstances, there may be a need for a series of different sessions building on integrated sets of skills – you may wish to train by completing a separate task in each session;
- In still others, you may wish to train an individual in knowledge and social skills.

It is imperative to plan the sessions with care as you are looking to achieve a specific result:

1. What is expected of the trainee after the session? This will probably be expressed in instructions – ‘make a Manhattan’, ‘wash the counter’, and ‘change the till roll’, etc.
2. Resolve where and when the session is to be conducted – at the job site before the service, during the service but in a quiet period, or in normal service? Bear in mind that acquiring knowledge such as recipes or legal issues might be best achieved away from the pressures of the service. Learning a

skill requires practice; hence, it may be advisable to do this during service, but you may have to work with the trainee. As a result, things such as time period and selecting the right sessions may become important.

3. Make a list of the training events, their stages, and the amount of time each will require.
4. Identify the subjects that will be covered.
5. Determine the teaching and learning methods to be used – will materials be needed, for example, when training to make a cocktail? Make a list of the required materials and highlight them. Will a video or an online service be employed?
6. Specify who will conduct the session.
7. Decide how the trainee's achievement of the objective will be assessed. Will it be through demonstration or observation during the job? Will it require tests?

Do not forget that the method through which the trainee is assessed is a by-product of the pre-established objectives.

Evaluating the Training Undertaken

Once the training programme is complete, you must assess its impact on the objectives you have established:

- Was the entire plan completed? What problems were encountered? How might they be overcome in the future?
- Consider the facets of the programme that worked the best and worst. What has this taught you?
- Review the training in detail. Which techniques were successful and which were not?
- What priorities should be established for future training? Is it now possible to concentrate on the identified points that previously had to be excluded?
- Lastly, considering the above objectives, what benefits did the training activities bring to the business?

Developing a Training Programme

Training is a vital part of the management function and is necessary to develop and guarantee quality performance.

In the hospitality industry, a number of hotel establishments take training seriously, while others discuss it at length but have no real agenda in place. Those who develop, establish and continuously upgrade their training sessions think of them as great assets of Human Resources Management. They give the management team a chance to build a team of qualified employees capable of performing duties according to preset standards. A good training programme ensures that mistakes are minimised since procedures are demonstrated and explained.

Planning and creating a training programme for front office employees includes pinpointing the errands performed by the front office staff, setting up step-by-step procedures for every errand, choosing who will conduct the training, administering the programme, and reviewing the steps in the process.

Identification of Tasks and Job Management Skills

The duties carried out by each employee are identified through the job description. Job descriptions are founded on the job analysis, which lists in chronological order the day-to-day errands performed by the worker. For example, the front office clerk carries out the following tasks during the day shift:

- 6:00 a.m. Enters start time with PMS.
- 6:05 Talks with night auditor regarding occupations of the 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. shift; checks the front desk message book for the latest operational notes.
- 6:10 Obtains from controller a **cash bank**, a specific amount of paper money and coins issued to a cashier to be used for giving change; counts and verifies contents.
- 6:30 Reviews daily report concerning occupancy rate and daily room rate.
- 6:35 Obtains function sheet (list of activities and special events, receptions, and the like) for the day.
- 6:37 Obtains housekeeper's report for the previous day.
- 6:40 Calls housekeeping and maintenance departments to determine the communications list (a log of unusual occurrences or special messages that the front office personnel should know about) from the previous shift(s).
- 6:45 Calls restaurant for information on specials for lunch and dinner.
- 6:50 Reviews expected check-outs and reservations for the day.
- 6:55 Checks out guests until 9:30 a.m.

Each one of the pinpointed tasks can be further broken down into skills so that solid training programmes can be created. This may appear to be a very painstaking procedure. It is! However, only the first step is tedious. Making use of each of the jobs in the front office guarantees that all jobs required for delivering hospitality to the guest are contained in the training programme.

Preparing Step-by-Step Procedures

Step-by-step instructions for each job help the trainee to comprehend how to carry out the tasks correctly. This method also makes it easier for the trainer to prepare and convey the training sessions.

If a PMS is available to the front office, the computer terminal operator has to learn to enter the commands and data sequentially. Documentation and written instructions on operating computer software have to accompany all property management systems. The documentation may be employed to assemble the step-by-step training methods for using the PMS, and it can be used as a basis for creating step-by-step procedures for other jobs.

A step-by-step method to fulfil the job of guest checkout on the PMS might include the following:

1. Inquire about the guest's accommodation;
2. Enter the guest's room number;
3. Inquire about late charges;
4. Confirm method of payment;
5. Print a hard copy of the folio;
6. Allow the guest to review the folio;
7. Accept cash, credit card or bill-to-account;
8. Enter amount of payment;
9. Enter method of payment;
10. Enter the department's code;
11. Check for a zero balance;
12. Give the guest a copy of the folio;
13. Inquire if additional reservations are needed;
14. Make farewell comments.

Each of the above headings may be further divided as required. For instance, as a subdivision of step 6, a new desk clerk can be taught to single out the chief sections of the folio and the charge to the guest to make him/her aware of all the charges making up the total. The guest might then inquire about the charges at this time, instead of when the bill is created, thus eliminating any extra work for the controller's department.

Management Concepts

Beyond task performance, additional, less concrete, skills have to be included in a training programme for front office workers. Management of stress, time, and organisational skills are among the issues that have to be covered. While these skills can be dealt with in a seminal format, they can't be segregated and covered in seclusion.

Such skills are better grasped when incorporated into the training session in totality, so they can be applied to task performance. For instance, the worker being taught to check out a guest should know that this process can take place under difficult circumstances: there may be long queues, several guests inquiring about charges, and pressure from waiting guests to keep the line going. Staying collected in such a situation comes with experience, but the facets of stress management will help even the newest employee handle a tense situation. Self-control and concern for the guest's wellbeing are dominant.

Managing time is another vital skill that allows employees to carry out given tasks in set times. For instance, the different departments rely on front office workers to pass messages to guests and other departments regularly; otherwise, much confusion may result for everyone concerned. Organising skills help employees to deal with the workload systematically rather than going from one task to another without finishing any of them. Completing the paperwork regularly, instead of

allowing it to collect in a big pile, is one example of how time management and organisational skills can enhance performance.

Steps in the Training Process

Preparation, delivery, trial and error, and follow-up are the recommended steps in the training procedure.

Preparation: “Get Ready”

The trainer has to plan all elements of the training session. The initial step is to put the behavioural objectives for trainees in order. Such objectives will pinpoint what every trainee needs to know once the session is completed, thus allowing the trainees to achieve the desired changes in behaviour. The objectives will help trainees to build their knowledge base as they develop skills. Behavioural objectives should outline what the trainee is required to know, how well they should be able to do it, and how quickly the task should be completed. For instance, a behavioural objective for a guest check-in may be: “The trainee will be able to perform the guest check-in procedure for a guest with a prior reservation on the PMS with 100 per cent accuracy in five minutes.”

This concentrates the trainer’s attention on training the desk clerk to fulfil the check-in for a guest with a reservation but not for one without a reservation. The trainee should also already know the step-by-step method of operating the registration module on the PMS. The target of 100% accuracy in five minutes may not be attainable during the actual training session since practice is needed. Hence, the desk clerk will have to practise to achieve the necessary speed.

After preparing the behavioural objectives for every training session, the trainer needs to know how to present the new skill to the trainee, link the skill to other parts of the employee’s job, go over the presentation area, schedule the session, and provide ancillary materials, such as audiovisual presentation equipment and printed material.

Skill presentation requires the trainer to show the step-by-step method with the needs of the trainee in mind. This is not an opportunity for the trainer to show off how quickly he/she can check a guest in. The trainer needs to be patient and look at the task from a beginner’s point of view. The trainer has to start by explaining what is expected of the trainee. Next, the main instructions have to be repeated, especially when dealing with complex equipment. The trainee also has to be informed about where to go if they need help (such as printed instructions, a user-friendly “help” program on the terminal, or from another employee). Trainers always have to explain slowly and check that the trainee comprehends everything said as the session continues.

The trainer also has to ensure that the materials required to deliver the session are fully prepared. Have DVDs, CDs, and videotapes been ordered and received? Have they been previewed? Is the VCR operational? Is the room scheduled for satellite or **PictureTel** reception, and are there telephone lines to send and receive video and audio impressions? Have **telephone initiation and reception agreements**, contracts between senders and receivers of PictureTel regarding specifications of the call and who foots

the bill for the call, been set? Have the satellite dish reception coordinates been set? Has all the printed matter needed for the training and follow-up been duplicated? Are sufficient numbers of copies ready?

All these preparations are essential to making a professional presentation. They allow detailed training to take place without interruption and give the trainee a way to review once the session is completed.

Delivery: “Show Me”

When demonstrating skills, the trainer has to think of the presentation from the trainee’s viewpoint. For instance, present the skill with the trainee to your right or left so that the trainee can see clearly as the presentation is made. The trainer has to speak clearly and distinctly. Talking rapidly or mumbling will only confuse the trainee. The trainer must consider not only what to say but also how to say it. If the trainer’s tone of voice suggests that the trainee is incompetent, he/she will discourage the trainee. Hence, the trainer should promote the trainee’s efforts, give praise when a skill is learnt, and always be patient.

Each industry has its own terminology. Trainees must become acquainted with this terminology during training. For instance, ‘house count’, ‘reg. card’, ‘no-show’, ‘sleeper’, ‘full house’, and ‘late arrivals’ are all terms used in the industry. Regardless of whether the trainee has prior experience from another lodging property, these terms should still be reviewed to ensure that the newcomer understands how each is used at the current establishment. In a previous job, for example, the term ‘late arrivals’ may have indicated guests who arrive after 9:00 p.m., whereas at the existing property it could refer to anyone arriving after 4:00 p.m.

The session needs to be divided into logical steps proceeding in a sequence. The step-by-step procedure prepared previously will enable the front office manager to impart the material in a systematic way. Trainees will comprehend such straightforward instructions as “Press this key on the keyboard to activate the registration menu” without difficulty as compared to “Here is the registration menu...Oh, wait a minute. Let’s go back to the reservation menu to see something...” Printed matter that outlines the process will help trainees to learn the skill while practising it.

The trainer is encouraged to think out loud, explaining every step and its importance as the skill is established. The trainee can then logically follow the demonstration. Should he/she have any questions, the trainee will feel more confident about asking them. This process of communication encourages the trainer, who will also be able to determine whether the trainee is acquiring the skill. The greater the involvement of the trainee in the process, the greater the chances of him/her learning.

Upon completion of training, the front office manager should observe how the employee carries out his/her duties. If the skills are carried out in an appropriate way, this suggests that the training was successful. Alternatively, if the trainee is confused and keeps making mistakes, this suggests that the trainer may not have ensured that the trainee was following the programme. As with all things, being a good trainer requires experience.

Methods of Presentation

The methodology used by a trainer to train an employee is determined by the specific topic being presented. Clerical and computer skills are typically taught through demonstration and on-the-job training. Role play is used to demonstrate customer maintenance relations, and training is carried by videotaping and analysing the role play, or watching and analysing commercially arranged videos or cable network programmes.

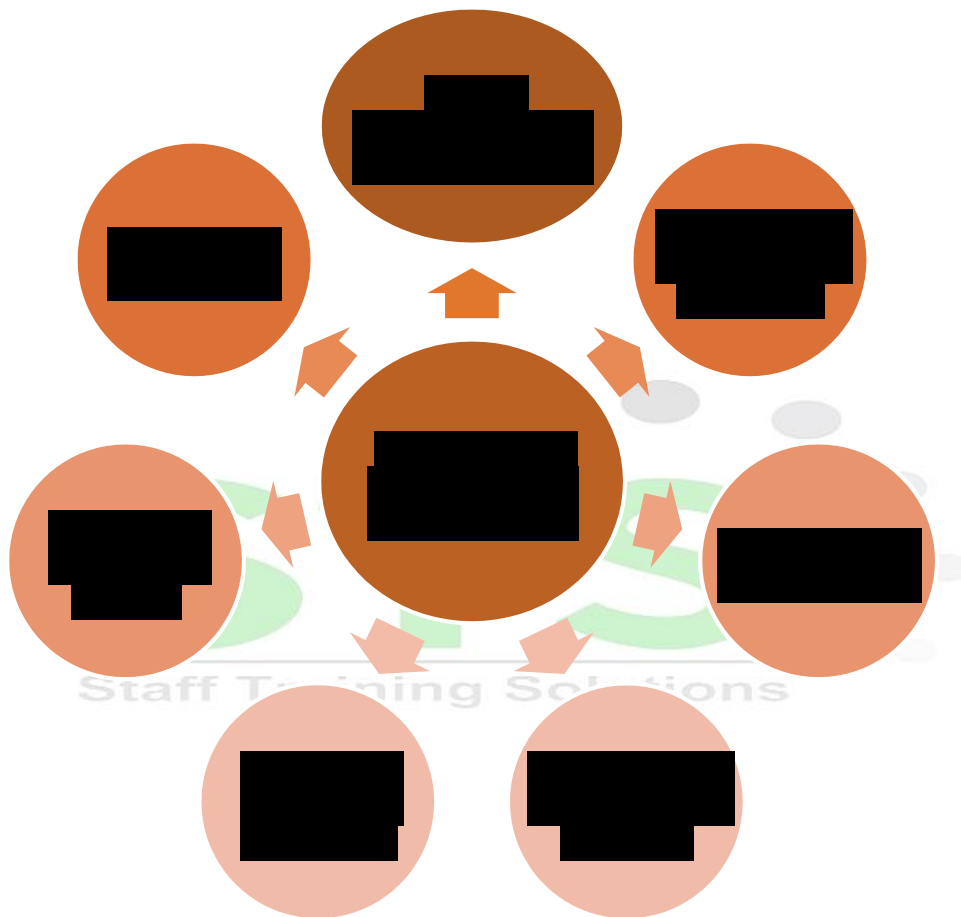


Fig. 5.2

Skill Demonstration

Skill demonstration of a particular task is undertaken by the trainer to show the trainee how to carry out certain jobs. The trainer will carry out the skill in an orderly way and then allow the trainee to practise; this has the advantage of the trainer being present to provide constructive feedback on the spot.

On-the-Job Training

On-the-job Training involves the employee observing and practising a task while carrying out his/her job. This technique has been the foundation of training in the hospitality industry. The planning and development

of a training programme followed by the establishment of the training sessions have to be integrated into on-the-job training for successful results. This technique trains the new employee to perform tasks on an “as-needed” basis: the employee only learns the task when required in the job. With this technique, however, the job demands come first and training takes second place.

Failure to follow up may result in the employee never learning the proper procedures for carrying out tasks. When this occurs, the foundations on which good training is based

- planning, development, organisation, delivery, and follow-up procedures - are compromised. This results in the employee failing to gain all the necessary skills required to do an efficient job.

Role-Playing

Role-playing gives the trainee a chance to practise customer service situations by acting the part prior to doing the job in reality. The front office staff will frequently have to be the sounding board for grievances and act as problem-solvers, even in situations where the problem is not related to the front office. From experience, we know that a customer with a guaranteed reservation will occasionally arrive only to find there are no vacancies, or will receive a key before the room has been cleaned, or will end up waiting an exceptionally long time before being allotted a room.

The various ways of dealing with such situations are often not communicated to new workers. It is only through trial and error that new employees are prompted to find alternative accommodation at a different hotel when theirs is overbooked, or to apologize sincerely and provide a different room to the guest sent to a dirty room, or to suggest a snack, or the patio lounge to the guest who has to wait for an hour before his/her room is ready. Role-playing gives the new worker the chance to confront such situations before they take place. The aim is to ensure that the employee will be able to deal professionally and provide a service with a smile when the situation actually occurs.

If videotaping equipment is available, trainees can be taped in role-playing sessions. This can be reviewed later with the employee to give feedback on their performance. The trainer can analyse the worker’s eye contact, diction clarity, speed of speech, poise, dress, and posture. This method is invaluable in preparing new employees to deal with the stresses of the busy front desk or an irate telephone caller.

Commercial Videos

Many commercially produced videotapes are made available by the Educational Institute of the American Hotel & Lodging Association, which front office managers may utilise when they train front office workers. These tapes depict customer service situations, allowing new workers to see how different customer relations are handled by other front office workers. The tapes should be previewed by the trainer and a list of discussion questions prepared to ensure that the employee comprehends the aim of the tape and is able to apply what he/she has seen to the job.

Distance Learning

There are new advances in **distance learning** offering educational and training options anytime, anywhere and at any location through Hospitality Television (HTV), a for-profit hospitality educational business situated in Louisville, Kentucky, that offers satellite broadcasts to hotels, restaurants, and food vending facilities. HTV provides training segments on issues such as team building, marketing strategies, customer service, and sales building in food and beverage sectors, enabling hospitality managers to train their workers on the job. They also have similar applications for front office set-ups. For example, a manager might select a specific training session for a number of different shifts of workers to watch at different times during the week. Later, the manager might utilise the information as the foundation of a training session.

Trial and Error: “Let Me Do It”

At this point in the process of training, the new worker provides a demonstration of the skill to the trainer, who, after observing the initial attempt, provides constructive criticism of their performance. The behavioural object is beneficial at this stage as the trainer can use it to establish whether the employee is carrying out the skill in accordance with the desired standards.

The trainee should be encouraged to repeat a procedure as often as necessary to master the skill and reach the desired goals. The trainer can also provide pointers on how much practice other workers required to learn a skill similar to this one. For example, “Many employees must practise five to six times before they catch on and reach the desired speed.” Lastly, the trainee will realise that instant mastery of the skill is not expected. The trainer needs to clarify how long the trial-and-error period will last. Some additional training may be necessary.

The step-by-step technique will be highly beneficial to the trainee in carrying out the skill. The portions of the skill demonstration that are unclear or confusing can be clarified through individual efforts.

Follow-up: “Check My Progress”

The trainer has to follow up after the programme has run its course. This is an essential final element in any solid training programme. The trainer can create a **training tickler file**, a database that maintains a record of the training sessions and alerts trainers to vital forthcoming dates for every new worker, listing the name of the training session, its date, comments, and follow-up date.

Administering a Training Programme

The training programme should include provisions for administering it. Many of the details have to be coordinated. Precise but flexible schedules for making training sessions available have to be set up and maintained. An employee training progress chart should be produced and displayed. Content preparation and copying of the training materials have to be done in a timely fashion.

The obligation to administer the training programme rests on the front office manager. If this duty is passed on to an assistant in the front office or human resources department, the administration details must be discussed with that individual. Useful training of front office positions is not easily applied in the hospitality industry. The non-stop flow of people at the front desk, special events, registrations, telephone calls, vendor calls, emergencies, and other needs mean the front office manager has to balance the immediate requirements with future needs. But, for quality hospitality products and services to be made available, training procedures for new employees have to be established and planned well.

Cross-Training

Even the most fundamental training programmes have to include provisions for developing worker skills that will prove useful to the establishment. The arbitrary nature of business volume and uncertain employee availability in the hospitality industry requires staff to be versatile. Cross-training, which means training workers to carry out multiple jobs and duties, is essential.

Front office staff personnel capable of carrying out more than one job can rescue the front office manager in a crisis situation. Cross-training will help to manoeuvre the front office manager out of difficult situations if they are planned for. Through training and maintaining precise records showing which employees can carry out other job responsibilities, cross-training can play a critical part in the lodging business. If cross-training is to be offered, it should be a part of the job description and pay rate. Prior to making plans for cross-training, it should be noted that certain labour unions forbid the practice of not assigning contractual duties, and in those situations, cross-training would not be a valid option.

Developing a Trainer

Careful thought should go into the selection of the person who will be training the new employees. This individual must have a professional attitude and be able to instil positive attitudes and enthusiasm in trainees for their jobs. The selected individual should hold a management or senior staff position. Additionally, the trainer must be familiar with all aspects of the employee's job and know the training methods. Expertise in performing tasks comes with practice following formal training. In training sessions, experience has no substitute. The trainee will certainly have precise questions about tasks, and the trainer has to be able to provide accurate answers as comprehensively as possible. Such answers are not always available in policy manuals or training handbooks – frequently, they are only learned through hands-on experience. The aptitude to teach is vital. The trainer must be able to plan a session in a systematic, incremental way. It is equally essential that the trainer has good communication skills. The training session can include discussions, demonstrations and workshops. The trainer also needs to have knowledge of all the equipment in the front office, be able to prepare printed instructions and be able to run the audiovisual equipment. They should know the fundamental steps of the training procedure. Lastly, trainers need to empathise with the new employee, perhaps by recalling how helpless they had felt when they were new to the job. Patience is vital, along with careful explanation. Trainers who

provide rushed explanations and avoid questions end up with trainees who don't feel ready to carry out their jobs.

The trainer needs to have a professional and positive view that is supportive of the company's goals of providing high-quality services and products, maximising profits, and limiting costs. Experienced managers should be wary of skilled senior employees who have mastered the tasks required for the job but harbour a negative attitude to the company or management. It is not advisable to enlist the help of such workers in training new employees. Moulding attitudes, teaching skills, and passing on knowledge are the responsibility of managers. Placing new employees in the presence of unprofessional people, or those with negative attitudes, during the process of training will undermine the aim of the sessions. The trainer must represent the company and demonstrate good employer and employee relations.

Further Reading:

- ✓ Debra F. Cannon, Catherine M. Gustafson (2013), *Training and Development for the Hospitality Industry (EI)*
- ✓ Michael J. O'Fallon, Denney G. Rutherford (2011), *Hotel Management and Operations*
- ✓ Kaye (Kye-Sung) Chon, Thomas Maier (2010), *Welcome to Hospitality: An Introduction*
- ✓ Malcolm Warner, Keith Goodall, *Management Training and Development in China*