A Consumer-Oriented Approach to Evaluation of New Employee Orientation Program

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Tales from the Field, a monthly column, consists of reports of evidence-based performance improvement practice and advice, presented by graduate students, alumni, and faculty of Boise State University's Instructional and Performance Technology department.

New Employee Orientation Program in a Manufacturing Company

An east coast manufacturer of electric lift trucks developed a New Employee Orientation (NEO) program in 2004 to train new employees. The objective of the NEO program is to share company and product information and to assist new employees to have *immediate success on the job.* Since its inception, the NEO program has served 850 new employees.

The company's manager of Organizational Development and Training (OD&T) has oversight responsibility for the NEO program and wanted to evaluate the effectiveness of the inherited NEO program in preparing new employees for immediate success on the job. She also wanted to identify what improvements could be made to increase the effectiveness of the program. A team of evaluators consisting of Boise State University graduate students from Dr. Chyung's Evaluation Methodology class conducted an evaluation of the NEO program. The authors of this article include the evaluation team members and the company's OD&T manager (evaluation client).

Evaluative Dimensions of Merit Determined by Consumer Input

The evaluation team used Michael Scriven's consumer-oriented evaluation approach (Davidson, 2005; Scriven, 2007; Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007) as the guiding framework for this evaluation. This consumer-oriented strategy allowed stakeholder input to be integrated into the evaluation design. Using a logic model supported by stakeholder input, the evaluation team identified five key dimensions of merit (criteria), addressing quality of the process, outcomes and cost of the program. Then, the team worked with the stakeholders to weight the importance of each dimension of merit (see Table 1).

Table 1. Key Evaluative Dimensions for the NEO Program

Type	Key Dimensions of Merit (Importance Weighting)
Process	1. Selection of NEO Topics (Critical)
	2. Curriculum Design (Important)
Outcomes	3. New Employees' Competency in Performing Immediate Job Tasks (Critical)
	4. New Employees' Compliance to Company Policies and Procedures (Important)
Cost	5. Reduced Time for Supervisors/Co-Workers to Train New Employees (Important)

Data Collection and Analysis

The evaluation team analyzed both quantitative and qualitative data collected from multiple sources through survey questionnaires, telephone interviews, and record review of existing data. The team also developed rubrics ('how good is good') to rate the quality of each

dimension and to determine the overall rating of the NEO program on a 5-point scale (Poor, Marginal, Satisfactory, Good, and Excellent).

Evaluation Results and Recommendations
Evaluation findings resulted in an overall rating of "Good" for the NEO program. Analysis revealed that the management and team leaders consider the NEO program topics to be appropriate; new employees believe that all six of the company's performance factors addressed in the curriculum (quality results, effective communication, teamwork, professional behavior, customer focused, safety) are relevant to their job; and the NEO program helps to prepare new employees for immediate success on the job through increased confidence. Results also showed that the NEO program's curriculum and delivery could be improved to enhance employee recall, knowledge, and compliance.

The evaluation team provided several recommendations for possible improvements to the client, including:
- Create an exercise that discusses how employees demonstrate the company values on a daily basis and maybe use a theme - to align the entire NEO program with higher company objectives.
- Provide follow-up online training via a learning management system, which would help in the perception of all the information being delivered in one day.
- Have PCs/laptop/equipment available for new employees to practice accessing the Intranet to find company information.
- Develop an advanced organizer for the course structure to help organize the information new employees need to know, assist with recall, and include information specific to certain groups of employees.

Advice for Evaluation Practitioners
Based on the experience of conducting this evaluation project, the evaluation team provides the following advice to other evaluation practitioners:
- Ensure a systematic approach in the evaluation process.
- Use a logic model to guide the evaluation process.
- Ensure use of multiple and varied data sources.
- Remain objective and neutral, and let the data guide the results.
- At minimum, do an internal informal meta-evaluation of the evaluation effort for overall utility, validity, feasibility, and/or propriety.
- Provide sufficient appendices to the client to ensure complete understanding of the process used to reach conclusions and recommendations.

References

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