Electronic Training Methods: Relative Effectiveness and Frequency of Use in the Malaysian Context

Veeriah Sinniah, University of Malaya, Malaysia
Sharan Kaur, University of Malaya, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

This study comparatively examines the relative effectiveness and frequency of use of modern and conventional training methods, as much rhetoric has surrounded the use of techniques like distance learning and computer-based training methods. The responses from 200 employees suggest that no significant difference exists with respect to frequency of use, but a significant difference exists in terms of effectiveness. The result shows that on-the-job training (OJT) methods are widely used and are perceived as the most effective method, whereas distance learning is not widely used because it is perceived as less effective. This study also reveals that a significant difference exists between modern training methods and conventional training methods in terms of attaining training objectives. OJT is given the highest rating for attaining training objectives.

Keywords: Conventional Training Method, Modern Training Method, On-the-Job Training, Training Effectiveness, Training Frequency

INTRODUCTION

A nation’s competitiveness depends, to a great extent, on the quality of its human resources. The productivity of its workforce, the ability to learn, relearn, acquire new skills and competencies and the commitment to excellence will inevitably enhance national competitiveness. Thus, Malaysia continues to focus on improving its workforce through constant training and lifelong learning to stay competitive.

Investment in corporate training in Malaysia, which aims to build a world class workforce, has been given greater emphasis in the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010). The government has allocated RM 4792.6 million (Ninth Malaysian Plan 2006-2010) for corporate training, and this includes industrial, commercial and management trainings, hence increasing the supply of educated and skilled human resource to support the expansion of education and training institutions.

The emphasis given by the government on corporate training is obvious due to its effect, direct or indirect on both employee motivation and organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Some organizations, planning for the long-term, invest in the development of new skills for their employees, so as to enable them to handle issues not currently present, but likely to come up in the future. Hence, the purpose

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of this study is to close the gap of employee’s
desirably approach with respect to train-
ing methods used in the relevant literature,
shedding more light into the relationship of
perceived training effectiveness with regards
to training methods. This study replicates
the study by Sadler-Smith et al. (2000), also intends
to explore the perceptions of management level
employees to some of the ‘modern’ training
methods and other more ‘traditional’ approaches
employed in management training; as there is a
gap between the rhetoric surrounding the sup-
posed value of these methods, and the reality
in terms of outcomes.

Learning and Development professionals
have been faced with a number of challenges
regarding the training and development of staff
namely, increased numbers of employees to
train; increased complexity in the type of work
employees are required to perform (and the tools
used at work); pressure on employees to learn
and demonstrate new competencies faster and
at a higher level; rapid changes in the business
environment and limited funding to achieve all
of the above. Many organizations have turned to
modern methods of delivery which do not rely
on conventional face-to-face contact between
trainer and trainee. Companies are exploring
the use of “e-Learning” courses, such as web-
based, intranet-based, and CD-based training
delivery systems to cut expenses and reduce
their reliance on travel (Jupnner, 2001). Today
the level of development of computer-based
training materials has risen dramatically as a
consequence of the new and exciting opportuni-
ties provided by the World Wide Web (www).

New training delivery methods continue to
expand because of the growth of the computing
technology, increased information technology
competencies, and reduced barriers to access-
ing and using the Internet. Effective strategies
for technology-based training and instruction
should focus on building virtual learning com-
munities, making the technologies used to medi-
atate communication as seamless and transparent
as possible in order to efficiently and effectively
reach as many learners as possible.

Today, the application of technology in
both its “hard” (for example through computing
technology) and “soft” (for example through
instructional design) forms has enhanced the
range of training methods available to practitio-
ners. Many organizations have turned to modern
methods of delivery. However, much rhetoric
has surrounded the use of techniques such as
distance learning and computer-based methods.
Consequently, the purpose of this study is to
explore the perceptions of employees to these
“modern” training methods as compared to
other more “conventional” training methods.

In reality the training methods used today
are not so new—they are simply a better applica-
tion of proven practices. Basically, organizations
rely on the same fundamental training methods
they have used; the instructional procedure and
the discussion or conference procedure. If train-
ing practitioners indeed have responded to the
exhortations of government and other attractive
proponents of modern methods, it is argued that
these should have been embraced, absorbed into
the training mainstream and furthermore ought
to have demonstrated their effectiveness. As
such, this study will attempt to investigate the
relative effectiveness of a number of different
training delivery methods and their frequency
of use based on employees’ perspectives. Fur-
thermore, an increasingly important issue is
the relevance of particular training methods or
approaches to small and medium sized organiza-
tions. Many of the researches have evolved from
a large organizations’ perspective of training and
development and did not perceive the support
of small organizations’ training as part of their
main role. One challenge for small organizations
is reconciling modern training methods with
the disparate needs of organizations. Thus, this
study attempts to explore any significant differ-
ences in perceived effectiveness and frequency
of use of training methods between small and
large organizations.

The current study was undertaken to
assess how employees perceive the relative
effectiveness of alternative training methods
to attain specific types of training objectives,
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