

FaxForumResults

MAY'S QUESTION:

Who Is Your Boss?

When we asked "Who Is Your Boss?" in the May edition of "FaxForum," we received a much wider variety of answers than expected. Clearly, reporting relationships for trainers vary widely among organizations.

Respondents' bosses tend to be highly placed. Fourteen percent of respondents say they report directly to the CEO of their organizations. And another 33 percent identify their bosses to be at a vice-presidential level or above, including such titles as chief financial officer, human resources VP, and executive VP of sales and marketing.

The real numbers might be even higher. Twenty-four percent of respondents identify their supervisors only as a "training or HRD professional," with no mention of level in the organization. And 14 percent say they report to a "line manager," also without identifying that person's level.

One respondent, Russell A. Zech, manager of personnel development for John Brown Engineers and Construction, in Houston, Texas, lists three bosses: the vice-presidents of human resources, construction, and projects.

Just over half of the respondents (52 percent) say their reporting relationships have shifted in the last year. And almost as many (48 percent) have seen their titles change in that time as a result of a reorganization or process redesign.

What's in a name? Michael Foster of HRM Inc. in Minneapolis, Minnesota, says his title has changed from quality manager to CQI specialist. He reports to a project administrator, and the top person in his department is the director of training.

Steve McKenzie, writing from Shreveport, Louisiana, used to be the manager of training, development, and employee relations. Now, his title

is manager of employee development and education.

Jim Venskus has seen his title at a San Diego, California, travel agency change from director of staff development and education to director of staff and organization development.

Nineteen percent of respondents report new department names. The new monikers include Executive Learning, Employee Development, Corporate Development, and Management and Technical Training. McKenzie says his firm is considering changing the department's name to People Performance Support.

Where is training? Nineteen percent of respondents report that their firms have centralized training functions, and 24 percent have decentralized training. (Of those whose companies have decentralized functions, one respondent—who did not provide a name—described the decentralization approach as "every person for themselves.")

The other 57 percent of respondents say their firms have a combination of centralized and decentralized training.

For example, Foster at HRM says that some of his firm's training programs are centralized; he gives PC use and stress management as examples. But "department-specific functions," he says, "are left to departments."

"Employees complete a self-study program with evaluation by store managers," explains Elizabeth Tobola of Remco America, in Houston. "And both employees and managers attend region-based and home-office-based training classes."

"Materials development and standards come from corporate," says Training Coordinator Kay Randolph-Pollard of McLane Pacific. But the corporate staff develops training materials "with data gathered at divisions

across the country. Each division has its own training coordinator to coordinate, give, and support training in the division."

Catherine Dennis is the training coordinator in the sales operations organization of Chicago firm SPSS. "Recently, HR hired a trainer for the entire organization," she explains. "But sales still has its own training group."

"There is a training department, but there are trainers also working in other departments," says Wagner Destro, a technical trainer for Data-sus, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. "I myself work in a kind of customer-service department, doing training and customer service."

Training or performance? We asked readers if they see their jobs moving from training employees to supporting their performance. And 70 percent of respondents said yes. In some cases, the shift to performance support has occurred because learning professionals have pushed for it. "We have had to 'sell' this approach to managers," explains Zech.

In D. Twadell's firm, MGIC, "Individual consulting has increased," with shorter, more focused programs that fit better into trainees' work schedules. Training is developed to fit the needs of specific teams, and almost all of it is experiential, with "on-the-job reinforcement exercises."

"It began as a technical-skills training position," says Dennis of her job at SPSS. "I have now changed it to encompass success of the entire sales organization."

Destro's job has also changed. "I am working less in training delivery and more in the development of job aids and tutorials," he explains.

Steve McKenzie sums up the difference between the old approach to learning and the new one: "We are trying to become human-performance technologists," he explains. "We used to train without asking what was going on. Now we're making sure that training is needed, or if there is another problem." ■