Read how the training organizations, such as Motorola University, in high-performance companies are different from those in low-performing ones. You can use the benchmarks to build your own top-notch training department.

Seven Ways To Make Your Training Department One Of The Best

We may be tired of the words *downsizing, restructuring,* and *reengineering,* but they aren't going to go away. U.S. organizations will continue to undergo those changes in the years ahead. So, what role should training and HRD functions play in helping to guide such efforts?

On a more operational level, how will you create the necessary links within your organization to ensure that training objectives and programs achieve maximum return—whether it's to boost productivity and profitability, reinforce new business strategies, assist in the re-design of key work processes, or give employees—from executives to front-line supervisors and workers—the skills they need to be successful.

Organizations are beginning to recognize that the key to being a future market leader requires different things from them and their people than in the past. Many are recognizing that training is critical in helping close the gap between employees' current competencies and the competencies needed in high-performance organizations.

Because organizational change is a continuous, complex phenomenon with potentially devastating consequences if not done correctly, there is a new appreciation for training as a way to move a company to new levels of productivity and

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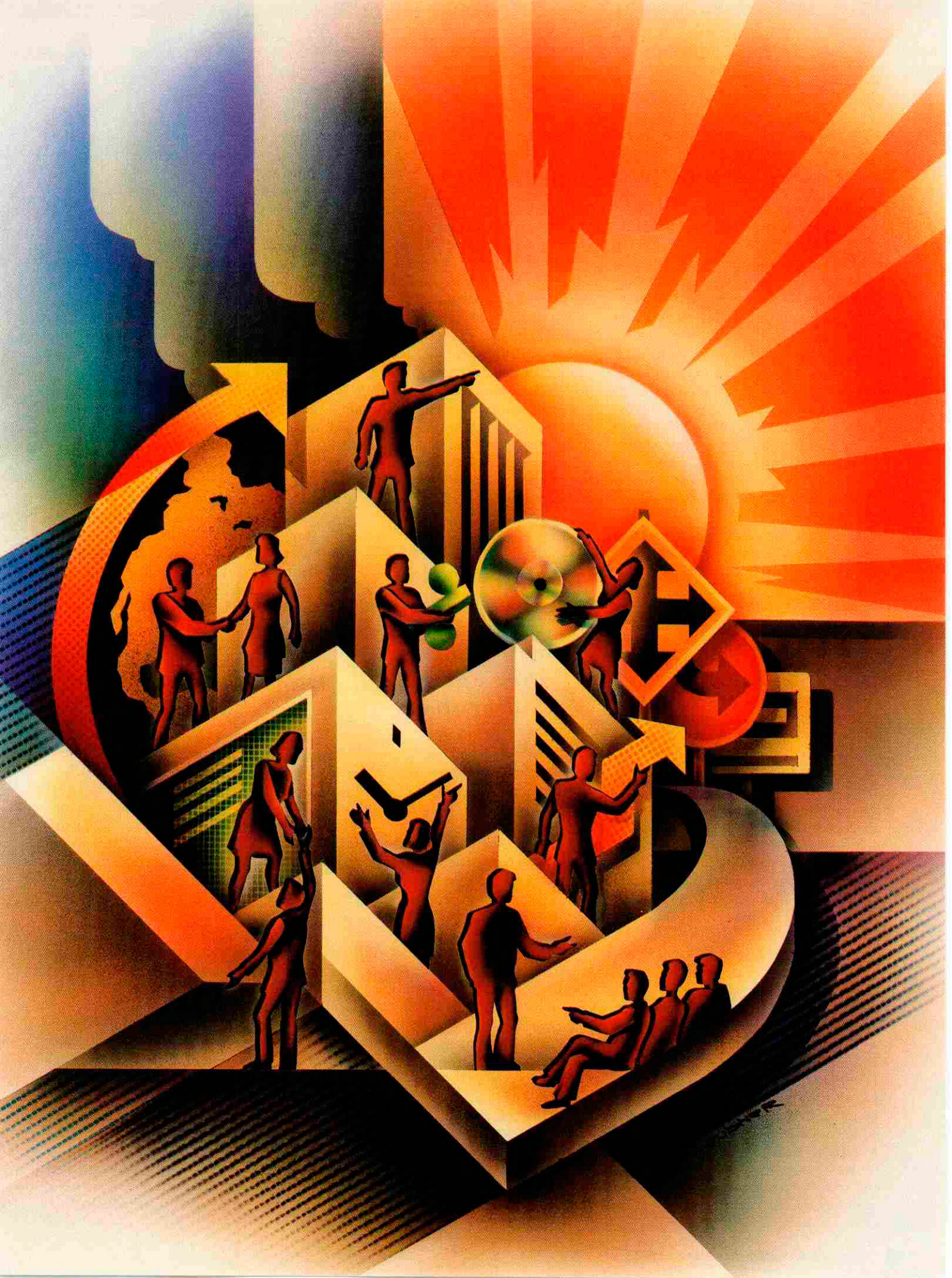
effectiveness, especially after downsizing or restructuring.

A company's training function appears well-positioned to enable organizational success. But in many cases, companies don't know how to create high-performance training functions to help them meet evolving needs. And in too many cases, training professionals haven't become full partners with senior executives and line managers in business development and strategic planning. In such situations, training continues to play a reactive role in organizational life instead of an integrative and transformational role in decision making, strategic development, policy formulation, and business management.

Emerging management practices

The emergence of high-performance organizations in the private and public sectors is prompting a redesign of the traditional training department. But how can you create a new, high-performance training organization? What does such an organization look like? How do you align it to support companywide business goals and plans? And what are the requirements of the training professionals in high-performance companies?

To answer those questions, Coopers & Lybrand—with the American Society of Quality Control, Rutgers University Center for Public Productivity, and National Institute of Canada—conducted a survey of 300 "improvement-driven" organizations to understand the implications for training departments. The 1994 survey documented the management practices used by those organizations to improve quality, customer satisfaction, and financial performance. The survey aimed to identify the best practices of each organization in these areas:

> leadership
> customer focus
> employee involvement
> innovation
> process improvement
> improvement measurement
> change management.

The survey was designed to identify the critical inter-relationships between practices in different organizational areas that can be critical predictors of effectiveness and financial success.

Not surprisingly, the high-performance organizations in the survey emphasized the integrative role of training. They recognized the strategic value in training for employees, customers, and suppliers. And they tended to invest more money in training than other companies.

In the high-performance organizations, there was also a tight link between training and organizational strategy. In such organizations, training had a strong partnership with business units or operational groups, instead of operating as an isolated staff function. And the training professionals were involved in activities at senior-executive and line levels. They played such roles as senior business

> ■ *In high-performance organizations, training is viewed as a function that operates laterally* ■

advisor, learning system specialist, and performance consultant—in addition to instructor, facilitator, and instructional designer.

The survey suggests that in high-performance organizations, training is viewed as a function that operates laterally across the company and that plays an integrative and even transformational role.

Coopers & Lybrand also conducted a benchmarking study subsequent to the 1994 survey. The new study included these companies:

> a computer-parts maker
> an auto manufacturer
> a telecommunications firm
> two international postal organizations
> a major retail chain
> a computer-systems firm.

Each exhibited traits of the improvement-driven companies on the prior survey; each was aligning training to support performance expectations and business goals, as well as long-term organizational objectives and strategies.

Here are the principal findings of the benchmarking study in the critical areas identified by the 1994 survey.

Customer focus. High-performance organizations collect customer-satisfaction data systematically and regularly. They understand their customers' needs and desires better than low-performing organizations, and customer feedback is used to improve work processes.

In traditional organizations, training often operates as a staff function separate from line operations and without performance metrics to assess quantitatively whether the training produces results in terms of organizational goals and plans. Typically, training in such organizations has a limited customer focus (for example, a classroom of participants). Satisfaction measurements tend to be event-based (for example, course evaluation forms) rather than continuous and organizational.

Training that is closer to customers. In high-performance organizations, the training function is closer to customers than in low-performing organizations. Training is "driven" by customers' needs, developed and designed in conjunction with customers, and evaluated continuously.

For example, the auto manufacturer in the benchmarking study has in-house training and development leaders at all of its plants. Those leaders operate as business partners with plant managers, helping to create and customize training programs that are specific to the needs of the plants and the company as a whole. The computer-parts maker and telecommunications firm have internal training organizations that report directly to their business units.

In fact, the computer-parts maker has more than 60 training organizations aligned with different customer bases, and most of the training dollars are distributed in individual business units. To ensure that training is relevant and reexamined regularly, each course has a "functional owner" and a "course owner." Functional owners are training managers for specific business units and are responsible for

GUIDELINES FOR COACHING AND MENTORING

Have you wondered how managers can get the most out of the training dollars your company spends on employee development and training? Or how managers should talk with employees about career development and training options? Or how those discussions should guide employees toward training and development opportunities that make sense for them?

One thing you, as an HRD professional, can do is encourage employees at all levels to take personal ownership for their professional development. But that can be difficult unless there is a systematic approach to human resource planning that encourages people to create and implement individual development plans.

One recommendation is for managers to take a performance-contract approach to coaching. The contract should cover these areas:

▶ the training and other development opportunities the employee will receive

▶ the expected outcomes of the training

▶ how the training will serve the needs of the organization and the employee.

Here are some guidelines for managers.

▶ Make it clear that employees are primarily responsible for their own professional development. Many already know that, given downsizing and restructuring. Still, it's important to be explicit and to explain what role the organization is willing to play in a partnership for helping employees grow and develop professionally—such as giving people challenging assignments and helping them network.

▶ Help employees create development plans that strike a balance between the current training they need to fill skill gaps or address performance issues and the long-term skills and development they need to ensure their employability and marketability. Address and discuss those needs in one-on-one meetings, and make sure the needs are expressed in any written contracts.

▶ Don't use development discussions with employees to talk about issues that belong on performance appraisals. The goal is to identify ways to address skill needs and development opportunities. It's not the time for an ad-hoc critique of work performance.

▶ Be prepared to act as a coach, mentor, and advisor to your staff or as a referral agent for others, such as peers. Gone are the days when bosses told employees which training programs to sign up for. Instead, encourage people to avail themselves of whatever training programs and resources the company offers and to craft development plans that meet new expectations and their own needs.

▶ Spend time with employees individually to help them develop or review their plans. Your input can be significant in terms of your own professional experience and development. You can also provide a strategic perspective on new skills, competencies, and experience that employees need if they hope to advance.

▶ Don't assume that all employees understand the career paths and development opportunities available to them. Given continuous change, people may feel uncertain about how to chart their career plans and training goals. Even high-potential employees report feeling "unmentored," saying that succession planning, development opportunities, and leadership coaching are hit and miss.

▶ Tell all employees that "up is not the only way" and encourage them to become subject matter experts so they will have greater professional options, opportunities, and security in the company and greater employability in the job market.

▶ Consider ways to use development discussions as opportunities for team building and for communicating new work expectations.

A major challenge that senior-level managers face is how to motivate people to work together in new ways—especially middle managers and supervisors who are skeptical about upper-management plans.

Talking with people about their career plans and helping them identify and take advantage of training opportunities are great ways to send a signal that you're willing to help people grow, even as you communicate more demanding work expectations.

▶ Prepare to be an effective coach, even if you find it hard to find the time or don't feel competent. You have to know the formal and informal development options in your company and decide the appropriate approaches. For example, if a senior manager is coaching a high-potential manager, the coaching should be collegial and collaborative.

▶ Follow rules of etiquette and common sense. Most people hesitate to seek career advice. So, set an informal, friendly tone that is also focused and purposeful. The goal is to help people identify development options, needs, and areas of interest. You can check how things are going by asking open-ended questions—such as, "What are your greatest training needs at the moment?" and "How can I be a resource about those needs?"
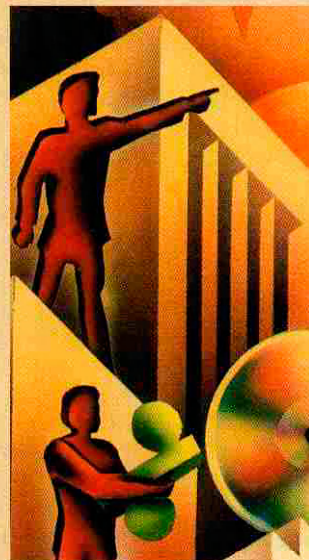
all courses. Course owners (who are also trainers) ensure the overall quality of courses, which they monitor and revise as needed. If a course doesn't have both a functional owner and a course owner, it's eliminated from the curriculum.

In the telecommunications firm, most of the business units have their own training organizations that provide the product training unique to each unit. Typically, new training needs are identified through discussions with line and department managers, through the company's annual employee-culture climate survey, or through other input. Designing and developing new courses take one to three months. But when an unexpected need for customized training arises, the training organizations can act quickly, turning in new courses or training modules in as little as a week.

Leadership. The 1994 survey of improvement-driven organizations showed that a critical predictor of success in achieving measurable improvement is strong, hands-on leadership by the CEO. But it isn't a silver bullet. It must be backed by the hands-on involvement of supervisors helping employees perform their jobs more effectively.

What does the emphasis on strong executive communication suggest about the training efforts of high-performance organizations? Traditionally, training has been more reactive than proactive in communicating an organization's values and business priorities. Most training hasn't been tied to business initiatives, but has consisted mainly of static courses and off-the-shelf packages that weren't updated routinely or customized to meet evolving job requirements and core competencies. In high-performance organizations, however, close and specific links exist between what senior managers think is important to the business and the kind of training employees receive.

The emergence of corporate universities in three of the companies in the benchmarking study signals an awareness that their training functions are becoming integral to helping guide their overall business goals and strategies.

At the auto manufacturer, there

■ *A critical predictor of success is strong, hands-on leadership by the CEO. But it isn't a silver bullet* ■

isn't an articulated training mission. Instead, the training staff shares a vision for the company's business with other employees. Says one senior training manager, "We're not in the training business; we are in the automotive business."

The training staff works in tandem with line managers at all levels. When developing training goals and programs, staff members ask themselves these questions:

▶ What is the company supposed to be doing?
▶ What do people need to achieve that success?
▶ How do we measure success?
▶ What is the gap between what people need and what they have?
▶ How do we close that gap in the best, fastest way possible?

One of the postal organizations in the study aligns the activities of all employees in support of organizational goals, to which end training's role is to eliminate deficiencies and give employees tools they need to make the postal business succeed.

At the retail chain, training is used at multiple levels to create a strong "guest culture" for customers—a goal that is articulated frequently by the company's top leaders as critical to the chain's success.

In all of the benchmarked companies, training is aligned clearly with senior-management priorities—and used to communicate and reinforce key organizational and business goals, articulated regularly and consistently by top management.

Employee involvement. The survey of improvement-driven organizations determined that in high-performance organizations, employees understand the link between their work and company strategies more clearly than employees do in low-performing organizations. Employees in high-performance organizations work continuously to improve work processes and to ensure that products and services meet customers' needs. And quality improvement is an important factor in employees' performance evaluations.

Those findings suggest that in high-performance organizations, it's likely that there is a tight fit between training programs and people's jobs. There also seems to be a stronger link between training and HRD systems (such as performance evaluation) than typically found in low-performing organizations. Employees in high-performance organizations also tend to have more ownership of their job performance and employability.

Of the high-performance organizations in the benchmarking study, three have development curricula linked to people's jobs; one has an automated assessment instrument employees use to determine whether particular courses are appropriate; and another views employee development as part of a larger process that includes selection, training, and job rotation. Another (the retail chain) requires at least one employee at each store to participate in Disney's customer-service training to ensure that employees learn customer service from an industry leader.

At the computer-parts maker, the training philosophy is that each em-

ployee is responsible for his or her employability. Though there aren't any specific training requirements, employees are expected to work closely with their managers on development plans that ensure that the employees develop the necessary skills for high-tech, precision-oriented jobs.

The company views training not just as a way to equip people to do their jobs, but also as a way to ensure a good fit between workers and their jobs. Top executives are compensated, in part, on the degree to which training helps assimilate employees into the company successfully.

At several companies in the benchmarking study (especially at the telecommunications firm), employees are expected to take much of the responsibility for their own development—though the companies provide training and evaluation systems with which to assess, monitor, and improve employees' performance.

Innovation. The survey of improvement-driven organizations showed that they provide a more favorable climate for developing and implementing new ideas than do low-performing companies. In high-performance organizations, ideas for new products and services originate at many levels, and employees' innovative ideas are accepted readily by management.

Those findings suggest that high-performance organizations emphasize learning and innovation. In fact, innovation is seen frequently in such areas as course design, development, delivery, and evaluation.

The telecommunications firm uses a game format (Jeopardy, tic-tac-toe, and so forth) to create pre- and posttests that can be delivered, administered, and scored via e-mail. That test system, developed by an outside contractor, enables the firm to vary the content of evaluations and fosters learning even before participants attend a course.

To deliver its training, the computer-parts maker uses a mix of sophisticated CBT and multimedia.

Other companies not in the study, such as Federal Express, use embedded desktop learning to enhance the professionalism of their front-line service people. Some firms, such as Mo-

torola, are implementing robotics and virtual reality as part of their training delivery. (See the box, The Motorola Story: An Interview.)

Many high-performance organizations use groupware and other software to facilitate senior-level meetings, group learning sessions, and team brainstorming. (See "Meetings Go High-Tech" by Jim Clark and Richard Koonce, *Training & Development*, November 1995.) Groupware enables users to collect and organize participants' input instantly and verbatim. Groupware can also speed the evaluation, rejection, and adoption of new ideas. And it can help people develop new business approaches and gain consensus because it lets them contribute opinions anonymously. That privacy facilitates cre-

> ■ *Although many companies claim to improve work continuously, top-performing organizations actually do* ■

ative discussion and learning among people that are uncomfortable being on record before they know how others stand.

Process improvement. How do high-performance organizations treat the issue of process improvement? Although many companies claim to improve work and business processes continuously, top-performing organizations actually do. For example, most respondents of the 1994 survey said they "strongly agreed" that customer-satisfaction data is used to drive process improvements. Respondents from low-performing organizations generally disagreed.

High-performance organizations in the benchmarking study have several mechanisms for ensuring the continuous improvement of training approaches and content. For example, to reduce cycle time, the training organizations of the telecommunications firm operate fluidly when programs need developing or updating, sort of like

SWAT teams to bring in as many people as needed. Subject matter experts or contractors design and develop courses to eliminate the "hand-off and wait time" that usually occurs when SMEs aren't involved in design and development. To ensure continuous improvement in training programs, training staff operate as internal consultants actively engaged with clients in brainstorming problems and developing customized programs.

That approach is also used by the computer-systems firm and the auto manufacturer. The computer-systems firm has three distinct training groups: delivery, development, and marketing-and-needs assessment. Members of the latter group serve as performance consultants and help determine appropriate training interventions.

Training staff at the auto manufacturer have been repositioned as performance improvement specialists. Their needs analyses are seen as the front door to potential solutions to business problems, of which training may be only one.

Says a senior training manager, "Training isn't always the only answer to performance issues here. Sometimes it's not even the preferred way. We might suggest job aids, self-paced learning, or a job redesign." Performance interventions are customized to fit individual employees or a group.

Improvement measurement. Closely linked with process improvement is improvement measurement. High-performance organizations in the 1994 survey paid more attention to improvement measurement than low-performing organizations. High-performance organizations recognize the importance of using multiple measurements—such as quality, cost, and time—to assess organizational performance. Top-performing companies also recognize that a single measure (for example, quality) is an insufficient benchmark for gauging business performance.

We found, in general, that HRD professionals in high-performance organizations focus more attention on such issues as shortening cycle times; reducing costs; and improving quality in products, services, and training

The Motorola Story: An Interview

TRAINING and a strong learning ethic are embedded parts of Motorola's culture. The company has learned that a few dollars spent on training translates to process improvement and empowered workers. Those are key ingredients of business success in an industry in which rapid response and the accelerated application of new learning—in areas from manufacturing to billing—make the difference between lackluster performance and marketplace dominance.

In this interview, coauthor Richard Koonce talks with Vince Seratela, director of planning, quality, and communications at Motorola University. Seratela discusses the company's training philosophy and how, from a structural and organizational point of view, it strives to align training with the continuously evolving needs of the business.

Koonce: *Talk a little about the philosophy of Motorola University. What role does it play in helping facilitate organizational and individual learning?*

Seratela: It acts as a change agent within Motorola. It's the role of Motorola University to understand, design, and develop learning interventions to drive critical business issues. We balance being responsive to what our customers are asking for with the need to think about long-term learning interventions and initiatives that may be needed to deal successfully with market pressures 10 or 15 years down the road.

So, you strive to balance "here and now" training needs with strategic planning for training throughout the company?

That's right. We're the strategic training organization of the company, but we still do a lot of tactical training development and delivery because our customers request it.

Vince Seratela

How do you achieve that balance?

First, you have to be an organization that prizes integrated thinking. We're at an advantage because Motorola University has strong competencies in research and instructional design. That enables us to envision the company's future requirements for training and education. For example, we have a high-end instructional design team that works with Motorola's high-end technologists to develop technology road maps. But the balancing core competency is training delivery through each of our 14 delivery centers. The centers sit, live, and breathe with our customers on a global basis.

You also have training operations in each of Motorola's business units? How do the delivery centers relate to those?

They are networked into the HRD training organizations in all of the units. That is one of the ways that we maintain our training balance. Our high-end instructional-systems designers run an empirically based, technology-based, and road-map-based instructional-systems design process that builds great training programs. On the other hand, that process is balanced with the people in the business units who are being hit every day with customer needs and business realities.

Do Motorola University's training endeavors overlap with or intersect with what's happening in the business units?

We have an integrated business-training planning process between Motorola University and the business units.

In addition, our lead managers from the design centers and delivery centers are involved directly in identifying the business units' critical business issues, because they work closely with the units' key managers.

Then, is it fair to say that, organizationally speaking, Motorola is more disciplined and structured than most companies for ensuring that training is aligned with business needs?

Compared to the companies that come here to benchmark us, especially across an entire industrial university like ours, Motorola is more disciplined than a lot of them. But we're not nearly as disciplined as we want to be. That's our challenge.

Where do you feel your performance gap is? What still needs to happen?

We need an even tighter linkage between business planning and strategic-quality planning. At the moment, they run parallel, and they need to intersect. They do intersect, but not often enough or systematically enough. That's one challenge.

Another challenge is to make sure our overall business-training planning is more integrated with the training planning that goes on in each of the business units.

Motorola is doing some innovative things with training delivery. Can you talk about that?

We've integrated an "emerging technologies" team into each of our design centers. We now say to all of our design, development, and distribution people, "You have to think about alternative delivery every step of the way as you design and develop programs." And we're moving ahead with alternative delivery systems. About 25 percent of our training courses are ready to go on the Web or our intranet via satellite delivery, CBT, or e-mail and CD-ROM. We also have advanced teaching-manufacturing laboratories and a virtual-reality lab.

When and how did you make the move to using virtual reality?

In one instance, our premier advanced manufacturing lab replicated a line of pagers. However, it was so costly that we knew we couldn't build a bunch of labs like that and ship them around the world. Moreover, the labs aren't something you can loan, put in a box, and send for six months to Motorola's operation in Tianjin, China, for example. So, our Technology Education Center said, "Virtual reality is the next logical approach." Now, we have three VR courses, all pieces of the advanced manufacturing lab. In addition, we have a lab in robotics.

Besides the savings, what makes the labs a powerful learning tool?

For one thing, the technology is so user-friendly that everyone from manufacturing associates to lead engineers can use it. Fifth-graders have worked in some parts of the VR lab when they have visited Motorola University and our Museum of Electronics.

Talk about why Motorola decided that it had to integrate training into line functions and operations.

There are many reasons. Almost half of Motorola's employees are outside the United States, so globalization is one factor that forced us to coordinate and integrate training across the company.

[Another factor] is technological complexity. We recognize that no one training organization in Motorola can do it all. The training organizations in our business units play a critical role in training and developing people in the units. But those organizations recognize that training is always a make-buy decision. So, a partnership approach among our training organizations is critical if we are to succeed and cover everything.

But perhaps most importantly, Motorola recognizes that training—no matter how and where it's delivered—is a key competitive advantage. There's more awareness of that than ever. Motorola is doing a good job of building systems solutions for its customers. As a result, we have to be integrated and matrixed if we're going to support those kinds of efforts. If you're not integrated and matrixed, you're not going to get there.

Does Motorola's integrated, strategic approach to training relate to technical training only? Or does it also relate to soft-skills training?

It's used for everything we develop and deliver. That's because our training has cross-functional impact. Our manufacturing processes, for example, have embedded knowledge that exists in many other parts of the company, areas such as billing and order entry. Because our business processes are interdependent, the way we work in one area of the company has to be mirrored elsewhere.

That's why a big part of the curriculum has to do with administrative cycle time. Cycle time is as critical in administrative services as it is in manufacturing.

More than many companies, Motorola values training for its own sake. Why?

That's true. We have what one consultant humorously called, "a cosmic appreciation of training." That's due in large part to the strategic vision of Bob Galvin, son of Motorola's founder. He continues to be a strong proponent of learning and is very active in the company, still pushing everyone: "What are you learning? Are you learning the right things?"

Another variable is that when we began our renaissance in quality in the late 1970s, under Bob's leadership, we developed a strong appreciation for the fact that you can't empower people and drive decision making down to the individual level unless you give people the tools. It's great to say, "You're empowered to stop the line." But you have to teach people *when* and *why* to stop the line. Every time we put a dollar against training to drive one of our quality initiatives, we get enormous benefits.

Can you give an example?

We run an "I recommend" program that is a sort of bottoms-up suggestion program on how everyone in the company can reduce waste in cycle time, administrative processes, or manufacturing. We found that as we put people through training in decision making, teamwork, how to run effective meetings, and how to design cycle time for manufacturability, the quality of suggestions increased enormously. It didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that training works.

We've been religious about measuring quality, cycle time, and customer satisfaction. We've kept the discipline and rigor of training, not just in Motorola University but also across the company. And that has helped build a companywide appreciation for how critical training and education are to this company's success.

than their counterparts in lesser-performing organizations. HRD professionals in high-performance organizations are knowledgeable about such topics as supply-chain management and the reduction of product-defect rates. In fact, their work often involves conducting interventions and measuring improvements in such areas.

The auto manufacturer has a detailed system for evaluating training impact at multiple levels, including how well employees assimilate new learning, how that affects productivity and behavioral change at the work level, and how those affect return-on-investment. Evaluation criteria are interdependent and linked with specific courses.

The computer-parts maker routinely conducts cost-benefit analyses on training in an attempt to ascertain nearly 80 percent of the time what value and impact training has (by program) across the company. Focus groups determine the questions to ask training participants, sending them and their supervisors online evaluation surveys on a random basis.

Though high-performance organizations pay more attention to improvement measurement in the area of training than low-performing organizations, they don't always collect hard data to determine training ROI. Many still rely on evaluation tools and historical experience for feedback and as a basis for evaluating training effectiveness and improvement.

Change management. Conventional thinking suggests that the management of organizational change is, at best, undisciplined and isn't easy to track, monitor, or assess.

Yet, the benchmarked high-performance organizations have strong links between change management activities and other business activities, including training. For instance, the auto manufacturer uses training to accelerate job redesign, as it continues to restructure and reposition to compete more effectively.

In one of the postal organizations, training is a principle driver of large-scale change. The training helps eliminate bureaucracy, improve efficiency, and make the company more market-driven and customer-friendly.

■ *Training is emerging to play a critical, integrative role as a driver of cultural change* ■

The retail chain uses training to create a culture of customer-friendly stores.

Several high-performance organizations in the benchmarking study use training as the basis for continuous process improvement— which is, in fact, the way to operationalize a culture change at the transactional level where the work is done.

All of the organizations in the study have communicated to employees a compelling need for change as the reason jobs are being redesigned, processes are being reengineered, and people are being asked to work in new and different ways. Training serves as the vehicle for operationalizing and sustaining the changes.

All of the organizations also focus on such variables as empowering front-line workers through new management approaches and on appropriate links between HRD systems and training goals.

A change engine

Clearly, training's new role in high-performance organizations is far from the traditional, stove-piped function that it used to be and still is in many companies.

In high-performance organizations, training is emerging to play a critical, integrative role as a driver of cultural change, process alignment, job redesign, and continuous improvement. In a very real sense, it is serving as a change engine to help generate an organization's resilience and core competencies. Those are the success traits an organization needs to compete effectively in a constantly changing, often-turbulent business environment.

So, what do those changes spell for us as HRD professionals? Whether we work in a high-performance organization, we must step out of our traditional roles as trainers, course presenters, and instructional designers to play more active and substantive roles as change agents, internal consultants, and business partners with such people as executives and line managers. We must be able to operate effectively at a high level in our organizations to help them develop and implement new business visions and strategies. We also have to operate at the day-to-day work level to help line managers and reengineering teams redesign key work processes. Then, we can help ensure that our organizations achieve and sustain effectiveness and vitality into the next century.

It's time to step up to the plate. We must be adaptable, resourceful, and resilient if we are to work with executives, line managers, process owners, and teams. They are our colleagues and our customers. ■

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