

An Evaluator's Introduction to Human Performance Technology

Authors: Debra L. Tate, Oliver W. Cummings, and Daniel J. McLinden, Arthur Andersen & Company, 1405 North Fifth Avenue, St. Charles, Illinois 60174; 708/377-3100.

Abstract: The field of human performance technology provides the opportunity for use of a wealth of management-oriented evaluation tools. This paper illustrates the application of evaluation principles in performance technology through examples derived from the authors' experience at Arthur Andersen & Company's Center for Professional Education.

Periodically, it is necessary for Arthur Andersen to review its performance systems to ensure that they are still in accordance with the business objectives of the divisions of the firm. One such project, discussed by the authors in this study, involved specifying a performance-based curriculum that will support the tax division's business objectives well into the 1990s.

A three-step methodology for curriculum development was used.

In the first step, the authors examined the business and strategic plans of the division to gain a thorough understanding of the division's expected developments and the performance measures that management will use to assess progress against the plans.

During step two, reviewing current operations, the authors examined the current job environment to identify performance problems and discrepancies that must be addressed in the revised performance system.

In the final step of the methodology, the focus was on systematically identifying the current and future performance requirements of all individuals within the division.

While the conduct of such a project may follow relatively well-defined steps, the process of selling

the project to management is not as well-defined. In their communication with management, the authors focused on four questions:

- Who is the real client?
- What is the business need for the curriculum plan?
- What are the benefits to be realized?
- How will we know if the curriculum has affected performance?

The authors' study illustrates the application of evaluation and measurement principles in performance technology within the context of a curriculum planning process in a large service organization. The authors found that the goals of both the individual and the organization are achieved through performance improvement. This can also be viewed as the goal of the curriculum planning process.

The case example presented in this study demonstrates that performance technology can provide management with a variety of valuable tools for use in organizational evaluation.

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