

Army Job Standard v. Training Standard

TRAINING FOR THE tank crews of the U.S. Army's armor branch exemplifies the difference between the terms *training standard* and *job standard*, with implications for training professionals, instructional designers, and decision makers in any industry.

First, a bit of background. The five phases of instructional systems design are

- ▶ analysis
- ▶ design
- ▶ development
- ▶ implementation
- ▶ evaluation.

The analysis phase identifies the tasks that a worker must perform to do his or her job. Next, each task must be analyzed to determine all of the elements or steps required to perform it. As part of that task analysis, it's necessary to describe the conditions under which a task will be performed and by what standard it will be measured.

For training professionals, there are two types of standards: a job standard and a training standard. A job standard establishes the criteria that must be met when an employee performs a task in actual work conditions. A training standard may have the same criteria as a job standard, but it also includes such considerations as resource constraints—for example, a lack of training funds, equipment, or qualified instructors. Such considerations may cause a training standard to be less rigorous than a job standard.

For example, if the job standard for the task of flying a plane is to travel from point A to point B without causing injury to passengers and crew, and without damaging the plane, should the training standard be less rigorous than the job standard? Obviously, no. Generally, the conditions under which training occurs may vary according to actual job conditions. A student pilot, for example, may train on simulators until a level of proficiency is established before advancing to more complex training on actual equipment.

In that example, the training standard should be the same as the job

standard. A student pilot should train under conditions that equal job conditions as much as possible before being allowed to fly. In his or her training, the fidelity of the simulator is a significant factor. If the simulator can't mimic actual conditions that the pilot will encounter while flying, the training won't provide the necessary realism for imparting the skills the pilot needs to fly safely in various conditions.

After simulation training, a student pilot will progress to flying under the guidance of an instructor. The training will continue until the pilot completes each task and subtask of being able to fly a plane safely before becoming a fully qualified pilot.

Different standards

For some tasks, attaining a training standard rather than a job standard is more feasible and more acceptable. For example, limited resources may prevent trainees from attaining a job standard. Or, different target audiences may need to be trained only to a training standard and not a job standard.

To illustrate the distinction, certain tank crew members of the U.S. Army perform the task, loading a tank's main gun. The crewman (only men serve in the Army's armor branch) who performs that task is the ammunition loader, commonly called a loader. The other three members of the tank crew are the tank commander, gunner, and driver.

The primary job of the loader on a MIAI Abrams tank is to load 120mm main gun rounds into the breechblock of the tank so that the gunner can fire the round. In combat, once a tank commander or gunner has located a target and a tank commander gives the command to fire, the crew's survivability depends heavily on a loader's ability to place the round of ammunition into the main gun as quickly as possible.

So, what is the job standard for that task? How fast should the loader be able to load the round into the main gun under actual job conditions—mainly, combat? The average time for a typical performer to load the ammunition round is five seconds, but is

that the job standard? Some can load in three seconds, but is that the job standard? Or, is the job standard to load as fast as possible?

Because most soldiers can load a main gun round within five seconds, that is specified as the job standard—the minimum standard every performer of that task would be expected to achieve. Now we ask: What is the training standard? Shouldn't it be the same as the job standard? Shouldn't each performer complete the task to the same standard? Why would the standard be less? Yet, we know that in many training situations, the training standard is less rigorous than the job standard.

Loaders are trained during their entry training for the Army. For tank crews, that consists of the One Station Unit Training program, which combines basic and advanced levels. The trainees must learn different tasks, including basic soldiering tasks such as using a rifle as well as tank crew tasks such as loading ammunition in a M240 machine gun and performing maintenance on the breechblock assembly of a MIAI tank.

Each armor tank course, whether basic or advanced, has a time limit for completion and a limit on the number of tasks that can be taught during a course. Trainers must decide not only which tasks should be taught, but also how well people will be trained in each task. Tasks that aren't covered become the responsibility of soldiers' units as on-the-job training.

Loaded questions

For each task, the trainers must ask this question: Does this task need to be trained to job standard—the way it will be performed on the job—or to a lesser but acceptable training standard, given the resource constraints of the course? If some tasks are trained to a job standard, there may have to be trade-offs with other tasks, such as deleting them from a course or training them to a lesser standard.

Another important question: Should this task be taught to soldiers who usually won't perform the task on the job but who still need to know how the task is performed? That in-

cludes tank commanders, who supervise ammunition loaders. Should the supervisors be able to perform the task to the same standard as the soldiers who must perform it on the job?

In addition, how long does it take to teach the loading task to a job standard? Some soldiers will be able to perform the task to a job standard immediately, some will take longer, and some will never be able to. On average, most will be able to perform the loading task to job standard conditions after 30 minutes of practice.

That doesn't seem especially long, but with a class of 80 trainees and 20 vehicles, four trainees per vehicle, the training time can be lengthy. The demonstration phase takes about 20 minutes, instruction on loading takes two hours and 30 minutes, and practice takes 30 minutes for each trainee. With dozens of tasks on which participants need training, the course on loading is significant.

If the training standard is to be the same as the job standard and trainees must perform the loading task within five seconds, what are the consequences for trainees who don't meet the standard? The time it might take for retraining and retesting must be considered. It's also necessary to decide whether failing the task is cause for dismissal from the course.

For the loading task, two hours and 30 minutes seems reasonable for training to a job standard. It is, after all, a very important task, one that may have to be performed in combat. For tasks that require longer practice time, Army trainers have to consider whether the tasks should be trained to a job standard or training standard. If it's a training standard for course instruction, the trainees' units must train them to a job standard. Or, the trainers can elect not to cover a task and leave the training entirely to the units.

For themselves, tank commanders may consider a training standard sufficient because the loading task is not essential for performance of their duties. They only have to supervise the task. In that case, the trainers can determine the training standard by requiring selected trainees from the target population to perform the task, calculating the average time it takes them to complete it. The selected

trainees must represent the wide spectrum of soldiers who will demonstrate how to perform the task for others who will require substantial training to complete the task to job standard.

Typically, a training standard requires less time to teach than a job standard. Because a training standard is easier to achieve, most soldiers will be able to meet the training standard for the loading task.

Implications for instructional design

Determining whether a task should be trained to a job standard or training standard is not easy and shouldn't be taken lightly. All too often, the distinctions get lost in the numerous, complicated decisions that trainers must make in designing and developing a course. When training standards are used continuously in courses, managers often believe that such standards are the same as job standards. But trainers should be able to explain the differences to managers and other decision makers who may be unaware of the consequences of choosing one standard over the other.

Trainers should give progress reports to trainees' managers and supervisors. The reports should specify which tasks are being taught to a job standard and which are being taught to a lesser standard that may require additional training.

In the case of Army tank crews, the progress reports let tank commanders know that the loaders and all of the crew are prepared to enter combat trained in the tasks that will keep them alive and make them victorious on the battlefield.

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these feature articles...

Some thoughts on The Invisible Wall—why the barrier to performance may be in trainers' minds, by the former chairman of Times Mirror Training Group and HRD Hall of Fame member, Jack Zenger.



How to achieve competency-based management by expanding your organization's capability and capacity.



A challenge to training professionals to prove custom competency models aren't a waste of time and resources.



How to facilitate performance using a strategic approach.



A new four-step approach to coaching for human performance.



And
in the departments...

- ▶ How to build your consulting business
- ▶ How to test for basic skills
- ▶ How to use the Internet in a job search and career planning
- ▶ How to use the new bells and whistles of email programs
- ▶ How to use dynamic HTML to create your own Webpage

And much more.