

# Workplace Basics:

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In Washington, DC a small architecture firm hires a training consultant to teach its staff how to communicate better with clients and with each other. In Texas, a major electronics manufacturer undertakes a comprehensive training program in the skills of teamwork. In Arizona, fire fighters, led by their chief, learn problem-solving skills.

From the military to the Fortune 500, employers across the nation are aggressively building a core of new basic skills in their workers. Many of these skills, such as learning to learn and teamwork, would not have been considered either basic or even necessary only a short time ago. But the days are gone when a command of the three Rs is enough to get and keep a job. Today there is a whole range of new skills that employers want in the people they hire.

This month, ASTD, in conjunction with the Department of Labor, will host a symposium focusing on the

*This article is based on research conducted under a two-year, joint project of the American Society for Training and Development and the United States Department of Labor. More comprehensive coverage of ASTD's research into basic workplace skills and the organization and structure of training will be available in 1989 in four books: Organization and Strategic Role of Training, Technical Training, Accounting and Evaluation, and Basic Workplace Skills. A Basic Workplace Skills Manual will be published as well. The authors of this article are part of the staff of the research project.*

# Skills Employers Want

By Anthony P. Carnevale, Leila J. Gainer, Ann S. Meltzer, and Shari L. Holland

results of a two-year-long joint study called *Best Practices: What Works in Training and Development*. The full results will be available in book form in 1989. This article covers one aspect of that study—the basic skills that employers want and that workers need in today's workplace.

## A new universe

New technology, participative management, sophisticated quality controls, customer service, just-in-time production—the reality of tomorrow's hi-tech workplace has already invaded today's businesses. For both current and future employees, this means that the workplace has become a changing universe, requiring expanded skills if workers are to operate in it effectively. But for many, mastery of the basic skills that would make them full partners in this new world is simply out of reach.

While not new, the basic workplace skills problem continues to grow out of a volatile mix of demographic, economic, and technical forces. These forces are creating a human capital deficit that threatens U.S. competitiveness and acts as a barrier to individual opportunity for all Americans.

The nation is facing a harsh demographic reality that won't go away. The supply of new workers aged 16 to 24 is dwindling, and employers will have to reach into the ranks of the less qualified to get their entry-level workforce. An increasing number of workers will come from groups of people whose development has historically been neglected.

At the same time, employers are seeking workers who are prepared to acquire new skills quickly. Employers know that as technology becomes more instantaneously available world-

wide, the presence of a highly skilled workforce to use that technology will give them a competitive edge.

Workers are being challenged as never before by an expanding range of skill requirements. To be successful today workers must be able to work with less supervision but be able to identify sophisticated problems and make crucial decisions.

Today's jobs demand not only skill in reading, writing, and computation but much more. Employers want a new kind of worker with a much broader

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## Technological change, innovation, and heightened competition drive the *upskilling* of work in America

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set of skills—or at least a strong foundation of basics that will enable them to learn on the job. They seek employees skilled in problem-solving, listening, negotiating, and knowing how to learn. Without these essential skills, the workforce, including entry-level, dislocated, and experienced workers, will have difficulty adapting to economic and technological changes. Also beyond the reach of an ill-prepared workforce are successful job transitions and career growth.

The most devastating impact of these skill deficiencies falls on the disadvantaged. Already outside the economic mainstream, they struggle to get jobs or to avoid being displaced. But poor skills further block their path to today's more demanding, well-

paying work. They are pinned at the bottom of the economic heap.

## What new skills?

Technological change, innovation, and heightened competition drive the *upskilling* of work in America. Competitive challenges motivate companies to use an array of strategies that call for innovative, adaptable workers with strong interpersonal skills. Business strategies—such as collaboration, exemplary customer service, and emphasis on quality—require workers capable of teamwork, listening, creativity, goal-setting, and problem-solving.

With the movement toward more participative management, employers are aggressively pushing decision-making down through organizational levels to workers at the point of either production or service delivery. As their jobs become more complex and less repetitive, these employees gain greater autonomy and authority. To perform well, however, they must have the broad set of skills once required only of supervisors or managers.

In the past, for example, a bank teller's primary responsibility was to repeat accurately a small range of tasks—monitoring checks in and money out, and reconciling. But competition has forced banks to attract customers by offering "one-stop" financial services, and the teller's role has been expanded.

Now privy to information once reserved for mid-level managers only, today's teller advises customers on a variety of customized financial services. Linked to information via computer, the new bank teller must quickly access data needed for decisions. To be effective, the teller may not

need a high skill level in a narrow area of expertise, but must have a wide *range of skills*.

Beyond good basic reading, writing, and computation skills, employers expect competence in creative thinking, personal management, and interpersonal relations. Also critical are abilities to organize and verbalize thoughts, conceptualize, resolve conflicts, and work in teams.

Today's workplace requires employees to have not only the standard academic skills, say employers, but also other key basics as a foundation for building broader, more sophisticated job-related skills. These additional basics are:

- **Learning to learn**—the ability to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to learn effectively, no matter what the learning situation;
- **Listening**—the ability to heed the key points of customers', suppliers', and co-workers' concerns;
- **Oral communications**—the ability to convey an adequate response to those concerns;
- **Problem-solving**—the ability to think on one's feet;
- **Creative thinking**—the ability to come up with innovative solutions;
- **Self-esteem**—the ability to have pride in one's self and believe in one's potential to be successful;
- **Goal-setting/motivation**—the ability to know how to get things done;
- **Personal and career development skills**—the awareness of the skills needed to perform well in the workplace;
- **Interpersonal skills**—the ability to get along with customers, suppliers, and co-workers;
- **Teamwork**—the ability to work with others to achieve a goal;
- **Negotiation**—the ability to build consensus through give and take;
- **Organizational effectiveness**—the understanding of where the organization is headed, and how one can make a contribution;
- **Leadership**—the ability to assume responsibility and motivate co-workers when necessary.

### How to train in the new basic skills

**The Foundation: Learning to Learn.** Employees who *know how to learn* can help their companies meet strategic goals by efficiently applying new knowledge to their work. Their learning capability can affect productivity,

innovation, and competitiveness. By knowing how to learn, individuals can achieve competency in workplace skills from reading to leadership. Without this basic skill, their learning isn't as fast, efficient, or comprehensive.

Trainers seeking to teach the skill of learning how to learn should attempt to identify the type of sensory stimulus—whether visual, auditory, or tactile

—that helps each employee learn best, and then design multiple-use training that addresses all preferences. Training should include various learning strategies and analytical approaches, and provide instruction on the most effective ways to apply these tools.

**Competence: Reading, Writing, and Computation.** To compete successfully, employers need a workforce

## Basic Skills in Action

### Reading

**The U.S. Military.** Two programs used by the Army and one by the Navy have boosted participants' reading scores and retention rates considerably. For all three programs, improved job performance and promotion potential are the goals. The programs teach reading skills according to the manner in which participants use them on the job; job task analysis identified actual on-the-job reading skills. The use of actual job reading materials as course texts has increased participants' current knowledge and enriched their prior knowledge.

In the Army's landmark Functional Literacy (FLIT) program, "Reading to Do" exercises teach trainees to locate information in manuals, to follow directions, and to complete forms. "Reading to Learn" exercises help them master and remember information they need on the job. The Army's Basic Skills Education program (BSEP) for reading provides instruction in reading processes common to many overseas military occupations. The program's text serves as a database and integrates knowledge of military culture and interpersonal skills with job information. Exercise modules and mastery tests teach job-specific "Reading to Do" and "Reading to Learn" tasks.

Based on FLIT, the Navy's Experimental Functional Skills Program in Reading focuses on "Reading to Learn" processes to strengthen long-term memory and provides instruction in "Reading to Do" activities that involve short-term memory and simple information processing.

### Oral communications

**Valley National Bank.** Arizona's largest bank, headquartered in Phoenix, employs about 7,000 people. From basic teller training to executive development, VNB's training program adheres to a philosophy of "managing performance," which calls for on-going employee development. Many of VNB's training courses include instruction in communication. The bank's vice president for training says that because banking is interpersonal, communication skills are needed even in the technical jobs. Courses in the VNB Employee Development Planner include negotiating skills, face-to-face selling skills, verbal and nonverbal communication skills, and communication skills for managers.

Training is provided through in-house trainers (who are predominantly line professionals), external consultants, associations, local colleges and universities, and vendors of interactive videos, computer programs, and workbooks. Employees meet yearly with a supervisor to plan their professional development. Each employee, together with the supervisor, creates a learning contract, which goes into their personal file. The contract is then used as part of their performance appraisal. Tuition for training is paid by the bank, either directly or through reimbursement.

### Interpersonal skills

**Duke Power Company.** This large utility company provides electricity to 1.5 million customers in the Piedmont-Carolinas area. Duke Power teaches interpersonal



solidly grounded in these three academic basics.

It is estimated that workers spend up to two hours each day reading items such as forms, charts, graphs, manuals, and computer screens. The use of computer-assisted machinery also requires reading skill.

Writing is important because it is the primary means of communicating

policies, procedures, and concepts. It is frequently the first step in communicating with customers, interacting with machines, or launching new ideas.

Computation is called for when working with inventories, reports, and measurements. Methods such as statistical process control (SPC) demand even higher mathematical skills.

skills within the context of its work environment. The situations used in observation and role play are ones that could occur in the work setting, so the participants have ample opportunity to practice and observe effective interpersonal skills. The program includes discussion of the environmental factors and attitudes that affect the communication process.

Before the training, participants receive a guide that explains what will be covered. At the start of the course, they complete a survey to determine their strengths and weaknesses regarding interpersonal skills. When the course is completed, they develop action plans based on the survey and the new knowledge they've gained.

### Teamwork

**Texas Instruments.** Texas Instruments's formal training program, Effectiveness Teams, aims to provide employees with the tools and skills they need to perform well as team members. Again, program concepts are taught in a functional context. Each work unit customizes the training to participants' specific needs. This ensures that the training is relevant to each unit's activities and that it ties closely to the corporate culture.

The training begins with train-the-trainer sessions for team leaders who conduct the training for employees in their work groups. A leader may be anyone from a key manager to a line supervisor.

Those in the leader's course receive a notebook of information on being an effective group leader, keeping schedules and maintain-

ing records, communication skills that facilitate teamwork, and the roles and tasks necessary for promoting effective teams. Team leaders then use corporate materials to develop their own courses for their employees. The teamwork course uses group interaction, discussions, and exercises.

### Negotiation skills

**Michigan Consolidated Gas Company.** At MichCon, negotiation skills are taught in a functional context and apply directly to the job. Courses are tailored to each group's specific needs. At the beginning of the course, participants review practical techniques and issues such as setting up a meeting, analyzing the authority of the person with whom the participant will negotiate, identifying and creating deadlines, knowing how to use deadlines, and learning which situations require negotiation skills.

The course also teaches skills needed for effective negotiation: communication, listening, and problem-solving skills. Trainees learn to analyze the interests and the needs of the client or opposition and to devise a negotiation strategy based on that analysis. They also learn to negotiate productively by identifying the other party's problem and helping with the solution. Trainees role-play on-the-job situations, and these role-plays are videotaped and then critiqued by the group.

When trainers teach traditional academic skills in the workplace, materials and concepts should be job-based, because relating the training to the job produces the quickest, most effective improvements in employee performance. Guidelines for training in writing, for example, must conform to the actual uses of writing on the job. If workplace writing entails analysis, conceptualization, synthesis, and distillation of information, the training should do the same.

Training in workplace math skills should also relate directly to the job. Instructional materials, for example, should simulate specific job tasks. This approach builds on what the learner already knows and emphasizes problem identification, reasoning, estimation, and problem-solving.

**Communication: Listening; and Speaking.** Success on the job is linked to good communication skills. Almost all work calls for some form of communication, either with other employees or customers. Central to competitiveness, communication skills help employees get and keep customers, inspire innovation, contribute to quality circles, resolve conflict, and give meaningful feedback. Poor communication skills, resulting in lost productivity and errors, can cost companies heavily.

Instruction in oral communication should focus on the importance of voice inflection and body language. Training should help employees understand that the communication styles they use affect how others perceive them and comprehend their message. Again, the training should simulate real job situations. Employees should learn to recognize their dominant styles of communication and how they manifest these styles. They should learn to understand and value communication styles different from their own, and to adjust their dominant style to the styles of others.

Training in listening skills also should simulate real work and help trainees understand how listening style affects relaying and receiving information. Instruction should focus on five critical skills: listening for content, listening to conversations, listening for long-term contexts, listening for emotional meaning, and listening to directions.

**Adaptability: Problem-solving; and Creative Thinking.** To achieve objectives, organizations often must



overcome the barriers to improved productivity and competitiveness by making problem-solving and creative thinking critical at all levels. Unresolved problems create dysfunctional relationships and ultimately impede an organization's flexibility and its attempts to deal with strategic change in open-ended, creative ways.

Problem-solving skills include the ability to recognize and define problems, invent and implement solutions, and track and evaluate results. Cognitive, group-interaction, and problem-processing skills are crucial to successful problem-solving. Workplace training programs in problem-solving should simulate real problems and be connected to an organization's goals.

Creative thinking produces new approaches, including creative problem-solving or creative innovation. Creative problem-solving often takes place in groups, so it involves effective teamwork and the ability to examine problems in new ways and invent new solutions. Through creative innovation, individuals or groups develop new activities that can, for example, expand markets and improve productivity.

Training in creative thinking should expand thinking processes by allowing a departure from logical and sequential thought patterns. For example, exercises in finding connections between seemingly unrelated ideas can promote creativity. Most training in creative thinking involves problem-solving, self-awareness and development, and group teambuilding activities.

**Personal Management: Self-esteem; Goal-setting/Motivation; Personal and Career Development.** In the past, employers believed that intangible personal management skills—self-esteem, goal-setting and motivation, and awareness of personal and career development—were skills an employee brought to the organization from outside. But new challenges are persuading employers to provide training in these areas in order to make their workforce more productive and competitive.

A person's effectiveness at work is a measure of self-esteem and personal management. To achieve on-time production and exceed quotas, for example, employees must be capable (and feel they are capable) of setting and meeting goals.

Key elements of self-esteem training

include helping employees to recognize their current skills, to become aware of their impact on others, to learn how to cope with stress, change, criticism, etc., and to show them how to go beyond self-imposed limits.

Training in motivation and goal-setting includes establishing and achieving objectives, and recognizing successes on the way to the goal. Like self-esteem training, it focuses on self-awareness and adaptability in dealing with things or people. It also emphasizes self-direction and organizational savvy.

Self-esteem and motivation form the foundation for personal and career development skills. Employees with

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### To achieve strategic objectives, an organization must depend on the problem-solving and creative-thinking skills of its workforce

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these skills increase their value at work and in the job market, and tend to have smooth job transitions and positive training experiences. Training in personal and career development skills includes techniques for understanding and expanding skills, and for planning and managing a career. Goal-setting is important, as are individual career progression models that explore training and education necessary to meet career goals. Other important measures that complement the training are the organization's ongoing counseling and its support of career paths for individual jobs.

**Group Effectiveness: Interpersonal Skills; Negotiation; and Teamwork.** Interpersonal, negotiation, and teamwork skills are basic tools for achieving the flexibility and adaptability that the workforce must have to be competitive. The team approach has been linked conclusively to higher productivity and product quality, as well as to enhanced quality of work life. Strategies for organizational change usually depend on employees' abilities to pull together and refocus on new common goals. Such successful interaction depends on effective interpersonal skills, focused negotiation, and a sense of group purpose. The quality of these

three factors defines and controls working relationships.

Interpersonal skills training helps employees recognize and improve their ability to judge appropriate behavior, cope with undesirable behavior in others, absorb stress, deal with ambiguity, listen, inspire confidence in others, structure social interaction, share responsibility, and interact easily with others.

The key to diffusing conflicts that can hinder productivity and the achievement of strategic goals is to improve employee negotiating skills at all levels. Training in this skill includes techniques for separating people from problems, focusing on interests rather than positions, inventing options for mutual gain, and insisting on the use of objective criteria. It also relies on a sound base of interpersonal skills and a clear understanding of the best approach for a particular circumstance.

Interpersonal and negotiation skills are the cornerstones of successful teamwork. Teamwork training must instill in employees the essential elements of building team relationships. The major objective is to develop an inventory of skills and attitudes that can be applied successfully to resolve problems and foster innovation.

Team members must know how to recognize and cope with various personalities. They must understand cultures other than their own and what that means to teamwork. They must also understand group dynamics, which evolve and change as the team approaches its goals. And they must be aware of other members' technical skills and ways to apply them.

**Influence: Organizational Effectiveness; and Leadership.** Once associated with employees on the fast track, these skills are now basic requirements in the workplace. Now, to compete in world markets, employers need workers throughout the organization who can function effectively with the organizational goals, assume responsibility willingly, and motivate co-workers to high performance. With these skills, employees create conditions for achieving goals and succeeding in the marketplace.

To be effective in the organization, employees must understand how their organization works and how their actions affect objectives. If they can identify obstacles to meeting these objectives, they can be master problem-solvers, innovators, and team-builders.

Training in organizational effectiveness focuses on helping trainees understand what organizations are, why they exist, and how to deal with their social realities. With this understanding, trainees can then analyze the organizational culture—its values and modes of operation. The last part of the training deals with skills that make employees fully functioning members of the organization—interpersonal, communications, and group dynamics skills.

Organizational skills are the building

blocks for leadership. In the organization's power structure, an employee becomes a leader either by virtue of authority and title or by cultivating the respect of peers, projecting a sense of reliability, being goal-oriented, and demonstrating vision.

Basically, leadership means that a person can influence others to act in certain ways. At times it is necessary to influence co-workers and work groups and to provide a vision of what the organization or a specific task requires. Skillful leadership is needed at every

level of the organization, from the CEO to the line worker.

Training issues for leadership include understanding the organization's strategies and tactics for achieving goals; leadership as an exchange process between leaders and followers; approaches for the task-centered leader; strategies for sound decision-making; developing and communicating a vision; influencing the behavior of others; and the importance of projecting emotional stability.

## A functional approach to training

The accompanying figure describes eight steps, from assessment to evaluation, for training workplace basics.

An excellent example of this blueprint for success at work is Mazda Motor Manufacturing (USA) Corporation (MMUC), whose 1986 sales topped \$10 billion. Producing automobiles since 1931, the Japanese automobile manufacturer owns several plants in Japan and in the fall of 1987 opened its first U.S. operation in Flat Rock, Michigan.

When the Flat Rock plant opened, Mazda had already prepared a detailed training plan for *every* employee. Phase I of its plan focused on basic workplace skills for the immediate start-up of the plant. The plan included courses in company orientation, Japanese life, job-specific, off-line training, and on-the-job training. Also included were "common" training courses in such subjects as *kaizen* (constant improvement), group processes, problem-solving and decision-making, safety and health, creative thinking, interpersonal skills, and statistical process control. Each employee's common training track comprised varying combinations of those courses.

The following describes how Mazda followed each step of the blueprint for success.

**Step I: Identifying Job Changes or Problems.** Because Flat Rock was a new plant, no problems or job changes had taken place. But to avoid possible future problems, the company took a proactive stance. From the outset, Mazda began educating new employees in its corporate culture through an effective, comprehensive training program.

With the cooperation of training and development staff, department managers, the labor relations department,

### Blueprint for success

#### Step I: Identify Job Changes or Problems Related to Basic Workplace Skills

- Assess the extent of the need for training due to job changes or problems
- Form a company-wide representative advisory committee
- Perform a job analysis for selected jobs
- Document employee performance deficiencies on the selected jobs
- Identify target population for training
- Build cooperation with unions

#### Step II: Build Management and Union Support to Develop and Implement Training Programs in Workplace Basics

- Make the case for skills training programs in workplace basics
- Build support for skills training programs in workplace basics

#### Step III: Present Strategy Plan to Management and Unions for Approval

- Present the strategy plan for training
- Select a training program architect:  
In-house staff vs. external providers

#### Step IV: Perform a Task Analysis of Each Selected Job or Job Family

- Perform a task analysis
- Determine whether to select a quick route through task analysis, and which process is most appropriate
- Review the generic elements of the task analysis processes

#### Step V: Design the Curriculum

- Design performance-based, functional-context instructional program
- Design evaluation system
- Design documentation and record keeping system
- Obtain final budget approval to implement program

#### Step VI: Develop the Curriculum

- Prepare the instructional format
- Select instructional techniques
- Select training site and designate equipment requirements
- Develop evaluation and monitoring instruments

#### Step VII: Implement the Training Program

- Select and train the instructional staff
- Develop a training contract—yes or no?
- Pilot test (optional)

#### Step VIII: Evaluate and Monitor the Training Program

- Carry out initial evaluation
- Begin on-going program monitoring
- Connect back to management



the personnel administration department, and Japanese advisors, the company concurrently performed job and task analyses of each position, breaking them down into major tasks. Interviews with managers, executives, and Japanese advisors indicated a need for training in "hard" skills, though they considered "soft" skills essential to enhance both the individual and the organizational culture. The latter skills include mutual respect among co-workers, constant improvements in production, open communications, pride, caring, and putting forth extra effort.

**Step II: Building Management and Union Support.** Mazda's top management has been involved throughout the development and implementation of programs. Supervisors have training and coaching roles and take responsibility for the development of employees in their areas.

Organized coalitions maintain ongoing support for programs, and a steering committee helps develop training plans and keeps the departmental members involved, giving them ownership in the training. Training coordinators help implement training,

and instructor leadership groups attend to the content and structure of particular programs. The employees' newly established union will provide a training representative to assist and advise on programs.

**Step III: Presenting the Strategy Plan.** Though final approval for the program came from Mazda executives, the active support and commitment of management was crucial. Each manager contributed to, and received a copy of, the plan and an analysis of cost estimates and recommendations for facilities and equipment, implementation time, and staffing. After making final revisions to the plan, executives approved it and distributed the final copy to the managers. From that point on, managers and program planners maintained close contact.

**Step IV: Performing a Task Analysis.** As mentioned, Mazda conducted task and job analyses during Step I. At this point in the plan, a shorter follow-up analysis using Step I procedures provided additional detail for the curriculum design.

**Step V: Designing the Curriculum.** Mazda's technical, job-specific training is performance-based and uses esta-

blished performance objectives to measure success. A production engineering group developed criterion-referenced standards, and instructors then developed tests from these standards to assess competency in each objective. Objectives for training in skills such as teambuilding, interpersonal relations, and problem-solving were set by instructors.

Mazda's emphasis is on training in a functional context—that is, job-specific training. To this end, Mazda incorporates as much job- or industry-relevant material into course texts as possible.

The total budget for start-up training was \$43 million. The early decision to provide training precluded the need for a specific operational budget. Although management support was firm, the case for the large budget included \$19 million in state funds.

**Step VI: Developing the Curriculum.** To develop the initial curriculum, Mazda's training and development department used both internal and external providers, often pairing instructional design experts with technical experts. Using a request-for-proposal system, Mazda

## STOP, LOOK, LISTEN



The art of effective people managing requires the cultivation and refinement of critical management skills. Britannica's dramatic new video series, **Managing People Problems**, gives managers the skills they need to:

- **STOP** problems that occur when employees feel stuck on a job plateau
- **LOOK** at how employees' personalities affect work output and
- **LISTEN** to what employees are really saying

Using dramatizations from real situations, **Managing People Problems** shows managers how to effectively meet workplace challenges.



**Motivating Employees: Trapped on a Plateau** outlines the four steps required to motivate employees who feel stuck on plateaus. The manager will learn how to diffuse employee resentment, how to develop solutions with the employee, and how to develop problem-solving commitment on the part of the employee. 18 minutes.

**Dealing with Different Personalities** allows managers to cut through the jargon of personality labels and deal with the person—not his task. The video shows how effectively treating problems which stem from personality differences will render a cooperative work environment. 16 minutes.

**Are You Really Listening?** explains how managers can cultivate the skill of active listening—listening not just to what is said but to the underlying feelings and attitudes of the speaker. The program also looks at three individuals who represent the most common listening faults: the "presumer," the "selective listener," and the "partial attender." 15 minutes.

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identified the best providers according to such criteria as price, content flexibility, follow-up, and ability to run evaluation pilot programs.

Currently, Mazda's training uses a variety of instructional techniques such as interactive instruction and role-playing, behavior-modeling, and videotaping. Within three years, Mazda plans to include computer-based training and self-paced learning centers in its curriculum.

**Step VII: Implementing the Program.** Four corporate-level trainers, 325 employees with various technical expertises, and 18 external instructors deliver the training. Outside trainers receive train-the-trainer instruction, which emphasizes content. In-house content experts with operation experience serve as temporary trainers; they take a train-the-trainer course that focuses on the training process.

Supervisors help each employee

develop a training plan and provide on-the-job coaching. Employees (with their supervisors) create their own employee development plans, in which they identify skills needed for future development, for the present job, for both personal and job growth, and for becoming a multi-skilled employee and individual.

In addition to coaching by supervisors, Mazda uses a formal employee assistance program, with two EAP representatives—one union-appointed and one from the company.

Mazda piloted its Phase I training to kick off the new programs. It allowed the training and development staff to identify logistical and delivery problems, and marketed the program to employees.

**Step VIII: Evaluating the Program.** Measures to evaluate presentations and instructors included employee reaction sheets, classroom observation, and participant interviews. But Mazda is currently developing a comprehensive, formal process to assess the programs' impact on the organization.

At six- and nine-month intervals following training, the evaluation process will determine how new hires use skills and how the company benefits from their performance. Also, the training department will maintain close contact with each participant's manager and supervisor to track post-training progress. Phase II training will continue this training plan for upgrading employees on the job and for training new workers.

### Final results

Today, basic skills in the workplace—taken for granted in simpler times—is becoming a crucial issue for many companies. In a world of new technology and changing demographics, many organizations (like Mazda) find that in order to get the best out of the available workforce—and the best out of their marketplace—they must create job-specific, basic skills training programs.

Training in workplace basics is just one of the many issues facing organizations in the next decade. In the November issue of *Training & Development Journal*, the ASTD/Department of Labor project will discuss some of its findings in an article on technical and skills training. The December issue will feature results on the project's management development studies.

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