



Training Versus Development

Over the years, practitioners have used the pages of *T+D* to examine this issue.

By Paula Ketter

“ARE WE DOING TOO MUCH training and too little development?”

“What is the difference between training and development?”

Those questions were examined in the pages of *T+D* magazine from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s. And those questions have led to many more questions and statements on the topic of training and development.

The term “development” has been bandied around among workplace learning and performance professionals for decades. Its importance was solidified when, in 1964, it became part of the association’s name, which changed from the American Society for Training Directors to the American Society for Training and Development.

The debate started in the June 1977 issue of *Training and Development Journal* and continued through the May 1992 issue. Today, the talk centers on creating training that develops employees for future careers in management or developing training that incorporates a company’s strategic vision.

June 1977

In the “Credibility in Training: Do Training and Development Have a Personality Conflict?” *Training and Development Journal* article, William A. Deterline states, “We might be doing too much development and too little training!”

Training and development are often contrasted in a way that makes training seem much more pedestrian and development much more worthwhile, in relation to each other. I believe that is unfortunate when the scale tips too far in either direction, and the current literature in the training and development field suggests that there is perhaps too little emphasis on design and development of effective, relevant, and efficient training.

Instead, attention is focused on development—organizational development, professional development, staff development, manpower development, management development—and such topics as self-awareness, communication skills, interaction analysis and interaction skills, and more effective ways of dealing with superiors, subordinates, and peers.

Whatever we do, under the umbrella of training and development, should be based on an analysis of the real needs within an organization. That’s part of the front-end analysis, before we make decisions and commitments. But we also have to ... find out whether we accomplished what we set out to accomplish, after we’ve taken our shot at it. ... Like it or not, this means that in at least one aspect of the training and development function, we have to behave as scientists and rely on data.

May 1992

In “Training Versus Development,” author William Fitzgerald says, “Yes, there is a difference between training and development. Understanding it can help you improve performance.”

Have you ever stopped to consider what training and development really means? For example, have you really considered how training is different from development and how they are similar?

Understanding the distinctions will help you understand the processes that characterize training and development, and the ways in which they affect the short- and long-term success of the organization. Developing an effective employee performance and development plan is one of those processes.

I define training as the acquisition of knowledge and skill for present tasks, a tool to help individuals contribute to the organization and be successful in their current positions, and a means to an end.

This brings us to development, which is defined as the acquisition of knowledge and

skill that may be used in the present or future, the preparation of individuals to enrich the organization in the future, and the act of being involved in many different types of training activities and classes.

Development differs from training in that it does not occur during a class. It’s what happens after the class that causes real development to occur.

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