



Education and Culture

Leonardo da Vinci
Pilot projects

TT-PLUS PROJECT
ISE, Romania
Case description
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TTPlus case description - Construction company - Romania

1. Introduction

The construction company have a long history as an important materials provider for construction field at the level of Constanta county in Romania. Before '90, the company was a state big enterprise with more than 1000 workers. The products of the company were used at a big scale for the huge construction housing in the communist period. During the period 1990-2007, the company faced many changes in structure, products, production schemes and staff. The main changes occurred in the last period are the following:

- transition from the state status company to a private based company;
- tremendous reduction of the personnel from approximately 1000 employers to 100 employers in 2007;
- introduction of new production technologies;
- new products and raw materials;
- new but instable market for their products.

3 interviews have been done:

- 1 informal coach in the concrete production department
- 1 worker trainee in the same department
- 1 manager of the company

2. Training scheme profile

A natural selection procedure of the employees have been applied, taking into account that a progressive reduction of personal was needed. Some employees left the company on their own, some others were send to unemployment based on the restructuring scheme. It is assumed that the best workers and personnel have been kept, while some special professional staff have been employed also.

Although in the last years the company faced many structural changes, there is no training department or training manager in the company. Anyway, the need fro training programs appeared based on the following factors:

- new equipments and technologies have been introduced and the employees needed to learn to work with;
- new legislation on construction have been implemented and specific requirements on quality of the products and processes needed to be applied by the employees.

Usually, the company pay for external training programs compulsory for their employees according to the law. This means about 3-4 days per year for each chef of department. Apart of the external training, workplace training is done in a more informal way in each department of the company. Usually, the chef of the department is responsible for workplace training and also for the assessment of the personal. Most of the training scheme are done by the chef of the department based on its own decisions, usually during the work program at the workplace.



3. Competences of a trainer

As we mentioned before, training is not seen as a priority for the company, although specific training needs could be easily identified. The most important training is done informally at the workplace. The chefs of the department are in charge to find themselves schemes, tools or approaches to train their workers. In this case, we are dealing with informal training positions that is assumed as a function by the chefs of the departments, even they are not defining themselves as trainers, nor having any specific train to train preparation. Most of the informal training activities are done by mentoring, coaching, job rotation, informal individual or group discussions.

Even the chef of the department is not seen as a trainer, the employees interviewed declared that they learn most from him. The qualities that employees are appreciating to their department chef are the following:

- long and relevant experience in the field;
- good professional, with a power of a model behaviour in the workplace;
- desire to create a professional identity of the department;
- empathy, sensitive to any questions and problems raised by the employees;
- creating environment for learning from each other in the department

4. Professional development of trainers

Taking into account that training is an implicit additional function of the department's chef, no formal train to train programs are followed by those in charge with company training. They are informally trying to identify the "fit to the need" solutions, based on their experience and sometimes common sense. They regularly attend the external training programs but only on the content related to the changes in technology or quality assurance rules. Other sources for their development are informal discussions with colleagues or personal development strategies like reading books or related information, mass-media or Internet.

Support provided/facilitated by the company

The management of the company sees the training as a compulsory task in order to fulfil the new regulations in construction field. They are willing to send their employees to the compulsory training programs and to pay for. The training on the job is not seen as a systematic measure for employees development. For the sake of respecting the rules in construction they are supporting the chefs departments to carry out the assessment of the employees and providing advices for using the assessment tools. The schemes like coaching, peer learning or job rotation are seen as a personal strategy of chefs department to improve their performances and quality of work.

Informal learning

Feedback from peers and employees is the main resource for improving their personal training strategies. Because a greater portion is on the job training, the strategies are adapted according to the individual needs of each employee.

Learning instruments

Reading books, carefully study the law in construction, studying the technical documentation of the new equipments introduced in the company.



Relevant learning experiences according to the trainers

Young employees and their feedback means the main learning experience for the chef department interviewed : *Young employees wants to understand everything and there are putting a lot of questions that for older workers are just routine!. They wants to know first than to act. Sometimes they propose new strategies and I am happy to take their ideas on board.*

Another important learning experience is represented by constant changes introduced in the company in terms of new raw materials, equipment and technology. The fact that this changes are introduced progressively, new machines and equipments are functioning together with very old fashion tools that are in place for decades. *"We learn that no matter problems we face, the production have to work somehow. My employees learned that sometimes we have to find rapid solutions to make the work done, even not all our tools are entirely appropriate".*

Ideal situation regarding professional development

The chef department interviewed would like to see more understanding of their efforts from the side of company management. More support and more opportunities to exchange experiences with other people in the same field would be also an important strategy that he could benefit from. Maybe some formal training on human resources development would also help, *only if is based on practical and contextual situations.*

5. Training practices

– Informal coaching

Every morning the chef department have an informal meeting with the team. They are discussing the tasks for the day and clarify the issues of their individual job for the day. Feedback from employees is very important to understand the needs for specific learning. According to the new regulation in construction, every week the chef of the department have a meeting of about 1 hour discussing the main regulation of safety and quality in construction. They are also assessed by the chef based on observation at workplace.

– Informal learning

There are many opportunities for informal learning. The team in the department have a special place were the have breaks during the day, meeting each other and discussing informally about their work. Specific informal events are also organized outside the company in the free time. Those events have different informal goals, but often they are end-up discussing and sharing ideas about their workplace problems, needs and climate.

– Mentoring

Each new comer in the department is rotated to different work settings to observe and learn from their mentors (employees with a longer experience in the company). After their rotation they may choose one of the work settings that they would like to develop their skills on.



Problems

Conflict situation between department and management team.

The role of informal coaching and mentoring end up in a strong identity culture at the level of department. This culture is often against the management policy in terms of requirements, tasks and way to do things. Management team seen this situation as a resistance to changes, while the department team is claiming their own rationality of changes. The lack of communication with other departments is also an additional problems for identifying common ways to resolve the problems in the company.

Innovations

In the context of a company where the training culture is not important, informal coaching, job rotation and mentoring are in themselves innovations borne from the desire to resolve day to day problems that employees are facing further to progressive changes introduced in the company. The informal training schemes were naturally and implicitly implemented in the daily work program. The professional experience of the coach is the main source of finding ways for training their employees in a manner of "fit to the need" training.

Evaluation of Training practice

Taking into account that the chef of department has only and implicit and informal training function, training practices as such are not evaluated at the level of company. In the same time, his work is implicitly evaluated but in terms of work performances of the employees in the department.

6. Diversity

In the studied department are working mainly men but also a women is part of the team. Because is the only one women in the team, the chef of department treat her in a different manner, avoiding to rotate her in workplaces that are requiring hard conditions. *I can not ask her to do hard jobs in our department. She is mainly work on the digital machines.*

7. Trends

In the context of continuous changes in technologies in the companies working in a rather fast evolving market, training is seen as an implicit activity of the people responsible for small teams. Sometimes training is seen as a compulsory activity when is required by the law and can not be avoided. Certification of the training is actually the main reason for the company to send their employees to formal training, the learning benefits in itself are not valued. The instability of the company on the market orient their activities based on surviving strategies, training being the last thing to be seen as a powerful investment. Even so, employees need to learn how to deal with changes and the closest help they can find are their peers and their coaches. People that are not formally appointed as trainers are developing them selves training activities based on the needs and feedback of individuals. The strategies are based on informal communication, common sense solutions and "fit to the need" training every time when needed. Professional development of the informal trainers would be helpful and possible as far as the training function of the department chef will be recognised at the level of company.



TTPlus case description – Multinational Insurance company - Romania

1. Introduction

The multinational insurance company started the business in Romania in '90s. In few years, the company covered already more than 50% of the insurance market in Romania, implementing extensive market strategies, products and financial services for clients.

The company is also known by its continuous training strategies. Especially in a country as Romania with a very recent history in insurance filed, training was very important to create a rather large pool of insurance consultants. Most of the potential employees are recruited based on their personal skills and market abilities, rather than previous education profile. That is way training in company is so important, being actually the main scheme for preparing the selling force.

The company is organised in regional and local agencies. Each agency is comprising a number of units with 10-15 employees. In the framework of TTplus project we studied the training schemes at the level of an agency and its units in Bucharest.

3 interviews have been done:

- 1 unit manager with training function
- 1 selling staff
- 1 agency manager

2. Training scheme profile

At the level of company, a training department is in charge to design and implement a training strategy. A pool of internal training staff is responsible to identify the training needs and to provide appropriate training for the employees. The most important training strategy is based on "cascade" as following: the training department provide training programs for agency managers and unit managers; the agency and unit managers are than in charge to train their selling force. This means that apart of managerial tasks, agency and unit managers have a clear training function in the company, even they are not considered trainers as such. Unit manager was taking into consideration as subject for our case.

3. Competences of a trainer

Usually the unit managers are selected from the internal selling staff of the company. The selection procedure is rather laborious, a series of selection stages and criteria being used for this reason. The selection strategy is based on the following stages:

- Analyses of the performances of the potential unit manager in its previous work as selling force;
- Personality standardised tests;
- Interview with an internal recruiter in the company;
- Drafting a unit development strategy.

In all stages, the social and communication abilities of the candidate are very important in the view of performing training activities as a future unit manager. After the selection, unit manager is appointed for 6 months in order to test its ability as manager. If at the end of the 6 month the



results are well according to some specific performance criteria, the candidate will receive the job. If not, the candidate have to return to its selling activity as financial consultant.

According to the selection criteria, the unit managers have to posses the following skills in relation with the training faction:

- Good social and communication skills
- Ability to identify the training needs at the level of unit
- Ability to provide training to the staff according to the identified needs
- Ability to coach and evaluate the performances of the employees.

The interview with the trainee highlighted the following qualities observed in the unit manager activity:

- Able to listen to the problems, empathy and calm
- Clarity of messages
- Able to motivate and support the team
- Always available for providing information, advices and clarifications
- Using practical examples in real contexts
- Available for joint call in selling meetings with the clients
- Good personal and professional model

4. Professional development of trainers

At least 5 days per year the company provides sessions dedicated to unit managers in various areas: marketing, time management, human resources management, communication, teambuilding, train to train, dealing with stress etc. The topics are based on a training needs analyses, where the unit managers could express their personal interests. The unit manager could choose the most interesting topics for him/herself. Usually, the training is provided by the training department at the level of company, but sometimes external trainers are appointed to deliver training sessions for specific issues.

Support provided/facilitated by the company

The management of the company sees the training as an important investment. In company training is valued for carrier progression and is evaluated every year. Most of the training sessions are financially supported by the company, sometimes full covering the costs, other times only partially. If the unit managers wants to engage in other training programs outside the company, the cost are not cover by the company and also the recognition is a question. The participation in training provided in the company is rather compulsory, especially because of the cascading principle – the unit managers are than obliged to replicate the training sessions at the level of their unit.

Informal learning

Regular management meetings (1 per week) at the level of the agency are also an opportunity to exchange experiences with peers. Annual incentives trips constitute informal opportunities to meet the best unit managers from all over the country and sharing experiences and problems.



Time to time, peer review exercises are organised between unit managers coming from different agencies all over the country.

One time per year a big conference is organised at the level of the company. The main reason for this conference is to celebrate the best performers and to hand them prizes and certificates. Both unit managers but also trainee confess that the event is highly motivating and a big opportunity to meet people from all over the country and to share informally their experiences.

Learning instruments

Other sources for their development are reading books, studying the law on insurance field, mass-media or Internet.

Relevant learning experiences according to the trainers

The power of the model was the most important learning experience for the unit manager interviewed. Taking into account the "cascading" principle, to learn the practices of your trainer was very important in order to perform on your turn the same type of training. Observing many types and styles of trainer's practices was a good range of models to be followed, having the possibilities to select that type of practices that fits best with his style and personality. *Some trainers I like, some others not. But a picked up something good from each one!*

Ideal situation regarding professional development

A network on training topic addressed to unit managers would be a good opportunity for learning. Employees are requesting sometimes training on specific topics and the unit manager have the feeling that is in the position to *reinvent the wheel*. Would be interesting to exchange training materials. experiences with other unit managers.

5. Training practices

– Informal coaching

Every week the unit manager have individual informal meeting with each member of his team. They are discussing the weekly selling plan, identifying the point of success or points for improvement. Trainees declared that those individual discussions are highly motivating because helps them to understand what they should learn more about products, processes or personal strategies.

– Informal learning

"Would you like a coffee?" strategy is applied often by the unit manager when he want to understand better some issues or wants some feedback from employees. An informal environment stimulates important, honest and deep discussions about different type of problems that encountered.

Team building activities represents an usual practice to learn from each other. At least 2 times per year the unit manager is organizing a trip outside the town. Sometimes a facilitator specialised in group dynamic is invited.



– Mentoring

Each new comer in the team starts with a period of mentoring. In the first month of work, the new comer is seconded by an older consultant in all the meeting with potential clients.

Problems

Taking into account that the training function is an additional one on top of other managerial, recruitment and evaluation functions, sometimes the unit manager feels overwhelmed. Even the training function is compulsory, the unit manager feels sometimes that their training activities are not valued enough at the level of company. The management seen the training activities as an important part of the job as far as the training activities end up in better performances of the consultants. That is way the most important challenge is to provide training “here and now”, all training activities being performance based targeted.

Innovations

In the context of a company where the training culture is very strong and a lot of non-formal training activities are going on, the innovation aspects consist in the followings:

- The power of the model as a strategy for training the trainers
- Embedded training function at the level of middle management
- Training “here and now”, based on immediate performances in the company

Evaluation of Training practice

Training practices of the unit manager are evaluated in the framework of general evaluation of the performances. When the results are not well, it is assumed that training was not efficient.

6. Diversity

In the studied agency are working an equilibrated number of men and women. The general policy of recruitment based on social and communication skills exclude in theory any type of discrimination on gender or other criteria. Moreover, the recruitment strategy is based on the assumption that anybody, no mater the background, can be successful if takes the work seriously. The company is ready to provide all the necessary training that any individual needs. Anyway, the company don't have an explicit policy for mainstreaming equal opportunities.

7. Trends

The company management think that the “cascade” training scheme was a good approach that already created a good pool of unit managers able to provide the appropriate training *when and where is needed*. That is why the policy is to reduce the importance of the training department, while more and more training activities are moved at the level of agencies and units. They think that this approach will reduce the costs for training activities and also the training will become more effective.



TTPlus case description Training institute in public administration - Romania

1. Introduction

The National Institute of Public Administration has a recent history and was established in the framework of European Project confounded by the Romanian Government. The Institute is an implementing institution of the governmental strategy on reforming the public administration sector in Romania. Under this framework, the Institute develops their training activities based on a series of big European projects, implementing various training schemes as: master degrees in public administration in Europe, continuous training of civil servants, training of trainers in public administration etc. The continuous training department of the institute is in charge with:

- Training needs analyses, studies and researches in public administration
- Training Program and Methodology Design
- Delivery and administration of training programs

3 interviews have been done:

- 1 trainer
- 1 trainee
- 1 program manager

2. Training scheme profile

The training programs respond to a high priority of the Romanian Government in reforming the public administration sector. The Institute is in charge to identify the training needs at the level of the sector and to design and deliver appropriate training for civil servants all over the country. Most of the training activities are developed under European funded projects and one of the main task of the Institute is to identify the best financial resources according to their training needs. All the training activities are project based.

Apart of training management team, the Institute use to hire for determined term contract different experts and trainers to organize, deliver and evaluate the training activities. Usually, the projects are organised in partnership with other foreign institutions and experts, trainers and consultants from abroad are part of the training team during specific training projects.

A lot of training programs are in-house training approach, teams of trainers visiting different public administration institution for training delivery.

3. Competences of a trainer

Apart of a core team of trainers permanently employed in the institute, most of the trainers are selected based on the training project requirements. The selection of trainers is done on the following criteria:

- Good knowledge of the training content (including Romanian and European legislation in the field of public administration)
- Relevant experience in training activities
- Good communication and social skills
- Availability for travelling all over the country but also abroad
- Foreign language skills
- ICT skills (for online training programs)



Foreign language skills is almost compulsory, taking into account that most of the training teams are international.

4. Professional development of trainers

Most of the trainers engaged in the projects are highly qualified trainers with a good recognition at the level of the sector. Anyway, when the topic of the project is rather new, the projects have usually a *training the trainers* component. Trainers starts their work in the project attending specific programs that are usually conducted by foreign experts and trainers from abroad.

Informal learning

Taking into account that most of the training is done based on a project concept in a multinational teams, all the preparation activities but also the interactions between trainers in various teams represents the most important learning experience.

Learning instruments

Reading books, Internet, studying the legislation and other policy documents in public administration.

Relevant learning experiences according to the trainers

Most important learning experiences were training programs organised abroad. They had the opportunity to get to know different training practices in different cultural context, organized by prestigious training providers in Europe. The interviewed trainer declare that most important learning was on methodology aspects, pedagogical approaches and alternative training methods, techniques and tools.

5. Training practices

- Counselling
- Group work
- Teambuilding
- Informal learning

Problems

The main problem the Institute is facing consist in a huge demand for training all over the country. This implies a lot of costs and resources for travels and trainers are always travelling all over the country in order to respond to different training request.

Innovations

In order to cover the big demand for training on a large scale and geographical areas to be covered, the Institute starting to design online courses. This new approach involves also a special training in using the online technologies, but also new approaches for facilitating learning. Blended learning environment are currently piloted at the level of the Institute.

Evaluation of Training practice



Training practices are evaluated based on complex methodology derived from quality assurance system implemented at the level of the Institute.