Workforce Development Brief

The June 2011 issue of the Workforce Development Brief continues this new publication service from the ASQ Education Division.

EDITORIAL

Closing the Gap on STEM Education
Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education requires the involvement of employers and workforce development professionals, as well as K-12 and higher education institutions.

The Challenges of Workforce Development and the Demographic Shifts of the Workers
This third installment of a six-part series provides information on one of the five components of a framework for the field of workforce development: demographics.

Using Short Cases to Enhance Education, Training, and Development: Possible Advantages and an Illustrated Example
Mini-cases provide an excellent way to teach critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making using real-life scenarios.

Basic Training: A Bit About Goals and Objectives
This multi-part series covers the basics of adult learning theory and instructional design.

Intrinsic Motivation: The Basics
This new series addresses the principles and practices used to foster worker motivation.

LINKS TO OTHER ARTICLES OF INTEREST

Training Within Industry Service
http://www.trainingwithinindustry.net/

30 Things We Know for Sure About Adult Learning
http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/adults-3.htm

Using Strategic Employee Recognition to Train Employees on Company Values and Objectives

Workforce Development Planning: Getting the “People Factor” Into Organisational Strategies and Plans
http://www.suite101.com/content/workforce-development-planning-a54185
Editorial

Closing the Gap On STEM Education

Deborah Hopen

Science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education is an increasingly important topic of discussion in K-12 and higher education these days. Even President Obama has commented repeatedly that the United States must improve its capabilities in these areas to remain competitive in the global marketplace. Clearly, STEM is a national imperative that warrants the attention of instructors, students, and parents. Beyond that, however, STEM should be a key concern of every employer, employee, and workforce development professional.

The reality of today’s world is that every job requires some degree of knowledge and skills related to STEM. Everyone—from shop floor workers to executives—uses computers now, and many of us can’t survive without a personal digital assistant (PDA) or a cell phone. We are required to keep more detailed financial records of our personal and work activities to support tax reporting, mortgage acquisition, and other similar activities. Even our off-work hours are inundated with technology—complex entertainment devices, microchip-encoded appliances, medical tests that pinpoint issues earlier and assist with more fine-tuned treatments, etc. For almost all of us, it’s no longer possible—or even desirable—to play ostrich and avoid learning how to program our digital video recorder (DVR).

This morning I received one of those forwarded e-mail messages from a friend (yes, I admit that the first thing I do every morning is check my e-mail, a task that requires a bit of technology savvy). The message predicted that many things we take for granted today will be gone within the next 20 years—such as checks, the post office, newspapers, books, land-line telephones, music, television, and privacy. A brief explanation was provided with every prediction, and I wasn’t surprised to see that all of them were based on the assumption that a new technological approach would replace the existing methodology.

ASQ’s Education Division is well aware of the need to improve students’ abilities in the STEM fields. That’s why the Division has joined with the University of Wisconsin-Stout to sponsor a conference, “Advancing the STEM Agenda in Education, the Workplace, and Society,” July 19-20, 2011 (see www.asq.org/conferences/stem-agenda/index.html for details). Speakers at this conference come from a variety of backgrounds, including K-12, higher education, and workforce development.
At first glance, the role of workforce development professionals in accomplishing the STEM agenda may be somewhat unclear, but on closer examination, it becomes apparent that employers must play an active role for this effort to succeed. Otherwise, a gap is likely to develop between the instructional efforts of K-12 and higher education programs and the requirements for high performance in the workplace.

In particular, the following two areas need immediate attention from employers:

- **Clear descriptions of the STEM-related requirements for all positions.** How much science knowledge is necessary to succeed as the CEO of a food producer? How many engineering skills are necessary to succeed as a plant maintenance technician? Is a basic understanding of algebra sufficient for a clerk to track budget performance? What technological requirements are built into the custodian’s position? The answers to these vital questions are complex and vary depending on individual organizations’ business focus, culture, size, etc. If a dialog is not established between the employers and educators to clarify these requirements, however, there is little hope that a reasonable framework can be established to guide STEM efforts.

- **Interactive relationships among education institutions and workplaces.** No matter how well defined and executed the education and training programs are, the practical learning—how to apply knowledge and skills—happens in the workplace, not the classroom. Currently, many students don’t have an opportunity to test their competencies until they graduate and enter the job market. Employers complain that students aren’t “ready for action,” but they do little to smooth the transition. Few school districts, technical schools, or universities would turn down the opportunity for students to interact with the real workplace through co-op programs, internship opportunities, mentoring relationships, onsite research, etc. For some reason, however, many employers are reluctant to open their doors to students; the excuses range from safety and liability concerns to a just plain stubborn attitude that the educational institutions should handle these tasks. Having served for many years on the board of a large school-to-work-life development organization, I can attest that the educational institutions always were eager to find a way to get students into the field for practical learning, but few employers were willing to get involved. On the other hand, the employers that did make these opportunities available enhanced their reputations as employers-of-choice and reduced their hiring costs for many entry-level positions—a win-win scenario for all participants.

### A Challenge

I leave you with a call to action. First, sign up today to attend the ASQ and University of Wisconsin Stout conference. Brush shoulders with the educators and learn more about their perspectives on STEM education. Express your agreement when they’re aimed in the direction that will help your organization succeed—and, of course, your disagreement and sage advice when you feel their efforts are misaimed.

Then, contact your local high schools and higher education institutions. Seek out ways to integrate your organization’s training ground with their classrooms. Hardware the relationships and programs, building a pipeline of well-developed graduates for the future.

Finally, implement a measurement system that demonstrates your efforts are paying off—that the return on your organizational investment in students is more than offset by their speed of integration into your workplace and the reduced up-front education and training costs you have to bear to bring them to initial performance.

I envision the day when the transition from school to the workplace is virtually seamless, but we can get to that point only if we start taking these steps today. In the end, it is those of us in workforce development that hold the key.

DEBORAH HOPEN is a management consultant who previously served in executive leadership roles in quality and workforce development. Hopen is past president of ASQ, and she currently serves as vice chair of Workforce Development and treasurer of the Education Division. Hopen also edits the Workforce Development Brief, Quality Approaches in Higher Education, and The Journal for Quality and Participation. Contact her via e-mail at debhopen@nventure.com.
The Challenges of Workforce Development and the Demographic Shifts of the Workers

Thomas G. Berstene

As I reach that magic age to begin receiving my military reserve retirement, I have begun to think about the challenges of workforce development in terms of the demographic shifts of workers. Just to set the record straight, I am not quite old enough to retire for real. I’ve just been 29 enough times to receive the benefits from an earlier career.

According to Jacobs, demographic shifts are based on multiple factors.1 Jacobs specifically talks about the changing size of the workforce and hints at the challenges facing new generations. In this article, I will explore that second issue from a slightly different perspective—how the younger members of the workforce obtain professional development.

The challenges related to the newest generations in the workforce were created, at least in part, by those in the older generation. Although we’ve made strides in improving education and our ability to train workers, we also have produced a workforce that does not know how to fail. Let me rephrase that: we never let the workers experience the pain of failure. Instead, everybody gets a trophy, and everyone receives praise. We aren’t allowed to use red ink in grading work for fear of bruising one’s ego. Everything is done in a group, which disguises individual contributions.

Part of learning is experiencing the pain of failure. We can’t let our workforce members physically hurt themselves, but there are lessons learned only by not getting it right the first time. For these latest generations, we have to adapt instructional approaches to meet their learning needs and styles, but we also should help them differentiate successful learning from this perception, which constitutes failure in an educational environment.

At the same time we created this issue, we also drastically cut the opportunities for learning in the workplace. In the 1990s, Michael Hammer and others led us on a journey of reengineering, or more aptly, workforce reduction. Unfortunately, what they cut first often involved the positions used for developing the workforce of the future. On one hand, reengineering was correct; there was a lot of waste in the workplace. They missed, however, the real value of some of the apprenticeship positions in both management and skilled labor.

Additionally, the job losses during the recent recession have amputated many training programs to the bare bones. In 1959, Donald Kirkpatrick introduced his model of training evaluation, which demonstrated that if trainers did not show their value to the bottom line, then the day would come when management would cut them… and so that has happened.2
Today, workers in many small- to medium-sized organizations, and even some large ones, are finding out that they are in charge of their own career development. The new generations of workers must determine and finance their education, training, and career programs. Workers have to go outside the organization to build their skills for better job performance or to prepare for advancement. At the same time, employers are looking outside the organization to find workers with the right skill sets and experience to fill middle- and upper-management positions. Why? It’s because the loss of internal knowledge, skill, and experiential development opportunities has left limited choices within the organization.

Here are a couple of examples. The first comes from my initial job after leaving active duty in the Coast Guard. I was working for a major insurance company and was talking with a ranking member of the accounting staff. Our discussion focused on whether to grow or hire employees. This person pointed out that he had to search outside the organization to find the right people and that his employees were looking outside for growth opportunities. This situation existed because he had lost the key intermediate positions that would have allowed his current employees to develop within the company.

Another example comes from the healthcare field. Looking at the on-the-job training that new nurses receive upon first entering the workforce, it’s probably a shock for most to learn that in smaller hospitals, nursing homes, and clinics, the nurses, if they are lucky, might get one or two nights with a mentor before being turned loose to fend for themselves.

In the area where I live, we have two major aircraft manufacturers. I often hear my neighbors discussing how hard it is to find the skilled tradespeople needed to do the work. They see that the workforce has a huge gap—between those who have the requisite skills but are ready to retire, and those who are available to replace the retirees. We have lost critical machinist and tool- and die-making skills because we cut the apprenticeship jobs. Furthermore, we’ve eliminated shop classes from high schools in favor of trying to send everybody to college, which also reduces the resource pool.

Our challenge is to develop the workforce of the future and provide it with the experience and skills required to succeed. We need to learn how to do this better and without putting our workforce in debt before its members even start working.

We also must figure out how to provide practical experience. One of my clients is a union’s regional training center. I worked with it to improve its ability to select the best candidates for the apprenticeship program, given the large number of applications received. The client actually conducts a performance-based program that spans two years. The new students first learn how to do all of the basic tasks in both the classroom and the field. The students then are sent out into the union’s workforce and are given an opportunity to gain the required experience (at one-half the pay of regular union members).

During the program, the students also are required to return to the training center periodically to learn additional skills. By the end of the program, these apprentices have worked under the direction of proven union members and have demonstrated journeyman-level competencies. They become full union members at full pay, and they aren’t in debt to the union.

This is just one example of how we can help new members of the workforce gain the knowledge, skills, and experience needed to fill the vacancies created by the aging baby boomer generation. Is there a way we can bring back or revitalize the concept of master/journeyman/apprentice?

The fringes of the quality movement are attempting to revive a system of training developed by the U.S. government just before World War II. It helped build a workforce that could produce the much-needed equipment to support the battlefront by building planes and ships. This Training Within Industry (TWI) was designed to reduce the amount of time necessary to develop the skills to perform specific jobs, and it was quite successful with production and repetitive work—primarily because TWI focused on just one part of a task at a time and drilled it until the worker got it right. One dramatic example of TWI involved the time to train a journeyman to grind lenses for bomb sites, which was reduced from months or even years to a matter of weeks.

One shortcoming of TWI is that it does not foster the knowledge, concepts, and principles that support the skills. TWI does not encourage the thinking required to create better ways or solve problems as they arise. It is not a panacea, but I believe that it can be combined with other educational methods to build the competencies of the new workforce, helping to fill retirement gaps.

We must face the challenge of developing workers. Not all jobs require post-secondary school education. We need to creatively apply some of the development tools at hand to build the knowledge, skills, and experience of our apprentice workforce so that they can begin to fill the journeyman positions that are open today. We also need to encourage and develop a continuous learning culture in the workforce so that new workers proceed to the master level and can help solve more of tomorrow’s challenges.

References


THOMAS G. BERSTENE is the founder and president of Workforce Planning Associates, Inc. (WFPA). He has more than 20 years of work experience in the area of quality and organizational assessments. Berstene worked for Aetna as an education evaluator and was a commissioned officer in the U.S. Coast Guard where he was a founding member of the Leadership Development Center. He can be reached at tberstene@workforceplanning.com.
Using Short Cases to Enhance Education, Training, and Development

Possible Advantages and an Illustrated Example

Mike Schraeder

Approaches to education, training, and development are as varied as the collection of individuals providing the training. One particularly popular method of instruction in numerous occupational and professional disciplines is the use of cases or case studies. Cases or case studies typically embody details regarding a particular situation or scenario. These details may include an overview of the context of the reality-based or hypothetical situation/scenario, as well as the individuals involved. Learners are asked to review the case and then respond to a series of associated questions. As such, cases can be a particularly effective method for promoting learning and critical thinking by actively engaging the learners in the processes of exploration, discovery, and real-world application. Case studies can vary in length, content, and complexity. Davis acknowledges that short, mini-cases (usually less than one page in length) can be quite effective in igniting fruitful discussions and learning activities. For example, short cases or scenarios have been used successfully to enhance training in relation to ethical decision making.

This article provides an overview of how short cases can be used to develop critical thinking skills for undergraduate business students. A sample mini-case is provided with a step-wise illustration of how the case is used. Although this particular example applies to undergraduate business students, this method could be modified and applied easily to other education settings including employee training or employee development workshops.

Short Case: Hypothetical Resistance to Change Scenario

You are a sales manager for a large company that manufactures and sells automated patient information systems to hospitals. You currently supervise a sales force of 10 people who have worked for the organization an average of five years. Some of your employees have worked there for more than 10 years, and two new employees for less than one year. The sales force is compensated on a strict commission basis where members receive a percentage of the information systems they sell.

Until recently, sales people were only responsible for selling the systems. Once the sale was complete, the sales people would transfer the order to other departments that would be responsible for installing the equipment and training the staff of the purchasing organization.
Due to the struggling economy and declining sales, your division vice president has informed you that all staff in the equipment installation and training departments will be downsized in the next two months. Consequently, sales people in your department will be responsible for all aspects of the system installation and training at that point.

Consider the following questions and propose a process for successfully implementing this change:

- How are you likely to react or respond to this change?
- What types of resistance are you likely to encounter and what strategies would you use to address each type of resistance?
- What major challenges do you anticipate in trying to implement this change?
- What approach would you take to inform your sales force of this change?
- What simple plan (outline) might you use to implement the change with the intent of making the new approach as successful as possible?
- How would you evaluate the effectiveness of this change?
- What additional information do you wish you had about this situation and the pending change?

**Steps Used in Short Case Methodology: An Illustrated Example**

It is important to note that there are numerous approaches for integrating a short, mini-case methodology into the format of the education or training session. The following illustration provides just one example of the commonly followed steps to foster the development of critical thinking skills for students in an undergraduate business course.

**Step 1:** After students receive a copy of the mini-case, they are asked to read it and then respond to the associated questions.

**Objective:** Allowing individuals to read and respond to case questions individually encourages them to use their critical thinking skills in ways that hopefully incorporate their individual/personal experiences, knowledge, skills, and values without others in the group biasing them.

**Step 2:** Students are asked to assemble into small groups of three to five people. Within the groups, each student is asked to share his/her responses to the case-related questions. Other group members are encouraged to ask questions for clarification regarding the rationale associated with individual responses.

**Objective:** Requiring each individual to share his/her response is intended to foster improved communication skills through clear and succinct articulation while also preparing students to provide insight into their rationale or thought process. Other learners in the group are exposed to alternative ideas and thought processes vicariously.

**Step 3:** Groups are asked to identify common or recurring responses to questions. These are then shared during the fifth step.

**Objective:** The process of collectively identifying common themes is intended to encourage the group to work in a collaborative manner, critically evaluating the characteristics or nature of responses to ascertain commonality, while simultaneously being exposed to the team dynamics of negotiation and compromise needed to reach an agreement. At an individual level, this step also serves to bolster confidence by confirming the thought processes of individuals that were similar to those of other learners in the group.

**Step 4:** A volunteer from each group is asked to share the common themes in responses that were identified in his/her group. In conjunction with each of the common or recurring responses, all students in the course are asked to reflect on the responses, identifying their possible advantages and drawbacks. Similarly, the volunteer is also asked to share any unique or novel responses identified within his/her respective group. Once again, all students are asked to reflect on these responses, identifying their possible advantages and drawbacks.

**Step 5:** During this final step, the instructor or trainer also will want to share any personal perspectives, opinions, or insights related to the short case that was covered. It may be valuable to ask learners to identify the “right” response or solution from those that were shared. Although there may be isolated incidents where there is clearly a “right” response, it is more likely that there will not be a “right” answer. Instead, it is more likely that there are several, equally viable responses that could be applied to the situation. It is important to note for the learners that this mimics reality because many of the situations they will face in the workplace have more than one acceptable solution, as opposed to a response that is clearly “right.” Lack of complete information about the scenario or situation also is noted as a common malady faced in real-world situations, where decisions often are made based on incomplete or less-than-perfect information.
Conclusion

There are numerous sources for pre-written cases; they often include learning objectives and suggested case questions, covering a variety of occupational fields. A less convenient, but viable source for cases is self-written scenarios. These cases can be based either on true or real-life situations or also on hypothetical situations that may resemble scenarios that the learners are likely to encounter in the workplace. There are several advantages associated with using self-written cases, such as, but not limited to, lower costs and the ability to tailor the case more specifically to the audience or desired learning objectives.

The development and use of short, mini-cases has numerous merits. Most notable among the advantages is the ease of reading and covering the cases during a single training session, class, or workshop.

References


MIKE SCHRAEDER is an associate professor of management in the Sorrell College of Business at Troy University-Montgomery Campus where he teaches a variety of management courses. His other professional work experience includes time in healthcare administration. Schraeder has a variety of research interests, including topics related to organizational change, employee attitudes, and organizational culture. His e-mail address is mschraeder@troy.edu.
The first installment of this multi-part series discussed four myths about adult learning. That initial article also covered how you process information and transfer learning to short-term memory as well as a review of what adults look for in a training session. The second article in this series focused on how to create optimal conditions for your training session and highlighted four key planning steps. One of those steps involved writing your training goals and objectives, which is often confusing because of the blurred distinction between goals and objectives. The section below reviews the differences.

A Bit About Goals and Objectives

Goal = a general statement about the intention of the training, such as the following:

• Participants will learn to deliver more engaging presentations.
• Participants will become more skilled at handling difficult people.
• Participants will learn to manage risk more effectively.

Objective = specific, measurable, observable behavior. Ideally, the objective also will include to what degree and under what circumstances the behavior will occur. Here’s an example of a well-written objective. “Without reference materials, list six words or phrases that elicit a negative reaction from customers.” Now let’s break it down into its components.

• Condition—without reference materials.
• Measurable, observable behavior—list words or phrases that elicit a negative reaction from customers.
• Degree—six words.

Objectives answer the following questions:

• What do I want the learner to be able to do after the training?
• Are there particular constraints or conditions under which they need to perform? (in 15 minutes)
• How well do they need to perform? (with 98 percent accuracy)

Characteristics of well-written objectives include the following:

• Convey to others a picture of what successful learners should be able to do after the training.
• Are demonstrable/measurable.
• Describe learner outcomes, not instructor behavior.
• Describe end results, not processes.

In reality, many trainers simply don’t have the wherewithal (e.g., time) to specify the degree and conditions and often settle for simply describing the performance. In many cases, this is sufficient. Here are some objectives that were poorly written but were improved by including more specific information about the expected performance after training.

• Poorly written objective: Internalize Javanet’s corporate culture.
• Improved objective: Write Javanet’s mission and values.
• Poorly written objective: Feel good about being a Javanet employee.
• Improved objective: Discuss the benefits of being a Javanet employee.
• Poorly written objective: Know Javanet’s sexual harassment policy.
• Improved objective: Identify behaviors that violate Javanet’s sexual harassment policy.

Why are the initial objectives unacceptable? They are unacceptable because you cannot easily observe whether the participants actually achieve them. If a halo suddenly appeared above all learners’ heads as soon as they’d internalized the corporate culture, then the first objective would work. Since this is not likely, you have no way of determining whether this objective was met. Now you’re probably saying to yourself, “OK, I get the first two, but what about the third one? People can demonstrate knowledge.” Right, but “know” is very vague, and it’s not a behavior that you can observe directly; however, you can observe someone demonstrating knowledge by stating, listing, discussing, writing, defining, describing, explaining, and summarizing. A useful litmus test for objectives is, “How will I know if this objective is met?”

Following is a list of verbs useful for objectives, arranged left to right from the most basic recall of information to application and synthesis of new learning:

define compare apply analyze adapt
describe contrast calculate arrange combine
distinguish differentiate create explain design
label discuss demonstrate summarize develop
list estimate illustrate state generalize
distinguish develop solve integrate
name discuss develop use modify
state illustrate generalize modify
name discuss develop use modify
state illustrate generalize modify
name discuss develop use modify

In a Nutshell

Your mission as a trainer is to determine what your audience wants, needs, and expects to learn; what they already know; what you want them to be able to know and do at the end of the training; and whether they actually have retained the new knowledge or skills. When you are able to demonstrate that these four dimensions have been addressed, you can feel confident that participants will be prepared for success.

Note: This is the third segment of a multi-issue column on basic tips for workforce development educators/trainers. It is based on an article originally published in “Educator’s World” in the April 2009 issue of The Journal for Quality and Participation.

MARGARET MURPHY has more than 15 years of experience training adults in both the private sector and higher education. She holds a bachelor’s degree in China studies, a master’s degree in education from New York University, and a certificate in the design and development of distance education. She is the co-author of ASTD Infoline: Trainer for Day. Her e-mail address is mmurphy@bellevuecollege.edu.
Intrinsic Motivation

The Basics

Christine Robinson

Why do some people succeed, while others don’t? Why can a long-sought-after promotion cause so much stress? Why do only a few individuals “get” anything out of a specific training class? What are my spiritual gifts and talents? Why do some activities seem to pass by quickly, why others drag on, and on, and on? If you have posed any of these or even similar questions, then it is time to learn more about intrinsic motivation.

It all starts in your brain—although some might suggest that it would be better to say your soul. Psychology and religion disagree on the ultimate source of what makes each person unique. The spark of life that makes you more than strands of DNA powering a chemical factory carries with it something that makes each person an individual. Whether you believe in nature or nurture, or are somewhere in between, you understand how to tell people apart. Faces, names, relationships, behaviors, and mutual experiences all help you differentiate between the people you know. Judith Harris suggests that these factors also impact your behavior and contribute to your uniqueness.¹ She also explains that the key determinants of individual behavior are a combination of genetics, relationships with others, membership in different groups, and competition.

The quest to understand why we act as we do has led to a wide range of behavior and motivation theories, each with some general usefulness in practice. George Box once wrote, “Essentially, all models are wrong, but some are useful.”² A brief list of some of the more widely known theories includes the following:

• The operant conditioning theory of Edward Thorndike and B.F. Skinner postulates that we learn and repeat behaviors based on their consequences.³
• Douglas McGregor’s Theory X and Theory Y categorizes people as those who are lazy and require authoritarian management and those who want to do a good job and deserve collaborative and trusting management.⁴
• Frederick Herzberg’s two-factor theory talks about the difference between and the impact of motivators and hygiene factors.⁵
• Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs looks at how physiological, safety, belongingness and love, esteem, and self-actualization needs, as well as cognitive and aesthetic needs, drive behavior. People whose lower-level needs are not met will focus on the actions that are most likely to satisfy those needs. Increased need...
satisfaction brings into play higher-order needs, introduces the possibility of taking the satisfied needs for granted, and redefines the ideal future (utopia).6

• Edward Deci’s cognitive evaluation theory looks at the concepts of self-determination and competence and their impact on enjoyment of activities.3,4

• The job characteristics model developed by Hackman and Oldham focuses on the impact of core job dimensions of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback; the psychological states of work meaningfulness, responsibility for outcomes, and knowledge of results; and desired outcomes as determinants of how you decide what you will do.5

• Cultural archetypes, such as those identified for The Stuff Americans Are Made Of: identify those subconscious motivations which are absorbed as part of socialization.10

This profusion of models tends to break down when working with individuals. Although it is easy to classify people into psychological types using one of the many assessment
tools on the market (such as the Myers Briggs’ Type Indicator, the Strong Interest Inventory®, the California Psychological Inventory™, and the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation™ assessments); it is difficult to use a limited number of categories and characteristics to explain accurately why a person does what he or she does. Even the “best fit” category will not fit exactly. Personalities are wonderfully variable, so a finite number of categories will always fail to account for every attribute that makes two people (even Siamese twins) so completely different.

Arthur Miller, the founder of People Management International, says, “Everyone has certain abilities he or she is motivated to use, certain abilities he or she is not motivated to use, and many aptitudes he or she is neither good at, nor motivated to use.”11 This leads back to the possibility that each person is born with (or develops early in life) a unique set of talents and dispositions, which make him or her an individual. This is important because it is exactly those talents and dispositions that can make the difference between success and failure. When motivated abilities are harnessed, they lead to passion, energy, creativity, and productivity. When denied, they lead to stress, unhappiness, and frustration—negative drivers, which can prevent an organization from achieving its goals.

Organizations seeking to maximize the return from their human assets should endeavor to discover the specific factors that motivate each individual and, to the extent possible, design and match work assignments to best harness these factors. Ongoing and/or innovative restructuring to optimize this matching of intrinsic motivation and work will help assure organizational success.

This brief has been adapted from the author’s article “The Keys to Turbo-Charging Intrinsic Motivation,” published in the Fall 2010 issue of the Journal for Quality and Participation. The second installment of this series for the Workforce Development Brief will discuss the problem of mismatched work and motivation.

Author’s Note: Motivated Ability Pattern (MAP) and System for Identifying Motivated Abilities (SIMA) are registered trademarks of People Management International LLC.

References


CHRISTINE ROBINSON is a consulting quality engineer who has earned the following ASQ certifications: CQE, CQA, and CMQ/OE. She specializes in quality systems development, documentation, and improvement. Robinson has more than 25 years of experience in quality for manufacturing operations and support, service, and nonprofit organizations. Contact her at cqechris@att.net.