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| **GET AHEAD** |
| A Work-Based Training and Development Program by Dr. Tammy Sagastizado |
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What is **GET AHEAD ?**

A WORK-BASED TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

**GET AHEAD**, is the delivery of a broad range of training programs that increase job knowledge, develop skills, and influence behavior.

The focus is on employee task development, strategic and tactical implementations, and employee personal growth and development.

**Introduction**

Workforce literacy, as a movement, has gained serious recognition in the past decade and has emerged as a major topic for discussion among business and literacy leaders. The fields of adult workplace literacy and workforce literacy have gained attention essentially because of a pervasive concern in American business regarding inadequate literacy skills in the workplace. The negative effects of low literacy in the workforce are financially significant to both employee and employer, and employers share concerns that their workforce will not be prepared for the technological advances of the future. Rapid labor market changes have created urgency among employers, requiring attention to skill deficiencies (Levenson, 2001, 2004).

While a national concern has surfaced about the number of marginally literate or under-skilled employees in America’s workplace, tremendous loss in productivity looms because of the lack of literacy in the workplace. Such loss in productivity is not the only cost associated with an undereducated workforce. Besides spending billions of dollars annually on remedial reading, writing, and computation skills, individuals bear considerable personal cost. The individual dignity of undereducated workers is diminished and their self-esteem is undermined (Alliance for Excellent Education [AEE], 2009).

In many workplaces in the United States, the need to train and educate today’s worker in literacy and job skills is clear, allowing workers to gain and maintain useful employment. Adult learners of language and literacy are quite diverse. They are high-school dropouts, underprepared college students, new immigrants who need to learn English as a second language (ESL), out-

of-work Americans who need basic language and literacy skills, and mature adult employees who need to upgrade their language and literacy skills in the wake of

“The end product of workplace education programs is an empowered and better-skilled employee ready to not only bring excellence to the workplace but to dream realistic dreams regarding career and education goals as well as job advancement. This process then reflects a remarkable return on investment.”

Barbara Edwards, Coordinator  
The Johns Hopkins Hospital Skills Enhancement Program  
Maryland

changes in their work environments (Donohue, 2006; Hunter & Harman, 1979, 1985; Jurmo, 2004).

The United States also has an increasing need for workers, whether native, immigrant, or outsourced, to improve their English language skills, so they can keep

current and knowledgeable in an ever-changing work environment. This need is not being met (Bates & Phelan, 2002).

Program Design

Work-based training provides a strongly communicative approach that fosters language development and use through integrated skills practice, task- and project-based lessons, and extensive opportunity for collaborative learning experiences and authentic interactions.

Sagastizado (2010) noted that improved literacy can help workers become more productive and understand the value of being at work on time, the value of their production, and how to compute better. When non-English speaking immigrants have the opportunity to learn to speak English, they are likely to make fewer mistakes at work.

Work-based literacy and work-based ESL classes help employees to improve the quality of their work, reduce errors in the workplace, improve communication, and improve their capacity to use new technology. The classes help some obtain better jobs as they become more independent. Employees are more likely to be invested in a job where they feel they are part of the company and are appreciated (Sagastizado, 2010)

*The process for implementing the* ***GET AHEAD*** *program is as follows:*

*An employer's advisory committee identifies the critical tasks where improvement is needed.*

*The L & D Specialist conducts an essential job task analysis, performs worker observations, and interviews stakeholders.*

*The L & D Specialist develops job-related, customized curriculum to assist employees in improving identified essential skills.*

*An instructional program is conducted for the employees at the*

*work site. Release time may be given to employees to attend class.*

*A return on investment is determined.*

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tep One: *An employer's advisory committee identifies the critical tasks where improvement is needed.*

A Learning & Development Specialist recommends, designs, and facilitates development interventions based on business need.

The specialist meets with administrators, managers, trainers, and so forth to determine the *needs* of the stakeholders. A *needs assessment* is conducted.

An analysis of each task, whether it is to develop basic job skills, learn vocabulary, fill out forms, learn a procedure, and so forth is conducted.

The program is then designed to meet the literacy needs of workers as well as the needs of other stakeholders, i.e., managers, line supervisors, HR, etc.

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tep Two: *The L & D Specialist conducts an essential job task analysis, performs worker observations, and interviews stakeholders.*

The program is task detailed, so there is not just one curriculum.

Therefore, a **GET AHEAD**  Learning and Development Specialist conducts a job task analysis, observes workers, and collaborates with other stakeholders.

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tep Three: *The L & D Specialist develops job-related, customized curriculum to assist employees in improving identified essential skills.*

The purpose is to determine the critical objectives, and develop performance goals for the class based on the objectives.

Then the L & D Specialist memos, and gathers job-related documents or processes, and then prepares criterion-referenced tests and curriculum to address the stated objectives.

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| **Bottom Line Benefits** |
| • Increased profitability • Better health and safety record • Increased customer retention • Increased employee retention • Enhanced corporate image / employer of choice |
| **Ability to Work Better and Smarter** |
| • Increased quality of work • Increased output of products / services • Reduced time per task • Reduced error rate • Improved health and safety record • Less waste |
| **New Attitudes** |
| • Improved labor-management relations • Reduced absenteeism • Improved employee morale |
| **Working with Others** |
| • Improved team performance • Improved effectiveness of supervisory staff |
| **Basic Skills** |
| • Improved capacity to solve problems • Improved capacity to cope with change  • Improved capacity to use new technology • Increased capacity to handle on-the-job-training |
| **Job-Specific Skills** |
| • More employees participate in job-specific training • Improved and faster results in job-specific training |
| **Improved Human Capital** |
| • Higher success rate in promoting and transferring employees within the organization |

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tep Four: *An instructional program is conducted for the employees at the work site. Release time may be given to employees to attend class.*

The Specialist works with members of the business to design, create learning programs and continuously improve and enhance the programs through new concepts, methods, materials, examples, and exercises.

Custom-developed programs using web-based education, learner initiated formats, and traditional delivery channels.

The Specialist designs, develops, takes care of classroom facilitation and coordination of administrative tasks.

Management of learning facilities, room set-up, preparation of student materials, etc. are collaborated.

**GET AHEAD**  Learning and Development Specialists create learning models and structures that communicate the intent and practice of abstract concepts.

**Accommodate work and other adult responsibilities.**

Logistical problems are a major barrier to persistence.

Work-based programs should offer classes in

accessible locations at times that accommodate the needs of working and non-working adults and employers.

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tep Five: *A return on investment is determined.*

The **GET AHEAD**  Learning and Development Specialist designs and implements evaluation methods to measure effectiveness of interventions.

By developing performance information, tracking ROI data on learning gains and employment outcomes. And use data to improve programs.

**A STORY**

One such company, Bartlesville’s

Hampton Inn, is employing a growing

number of limited English speaking

housekeepers.

Trudy Green, director

of the Bartlesville Adult Learning

Center, has found the Hampton Inn to

be an excellent opportunity to develop

a work-based education program

which focuses on English as a Second

Language (ESL).

Since the implementation of the

ESL work-based class, Emily Oswald,

general manager of the Bartlesville

Hampton Inn, says she has noticed

that the housekeepers understand

her instructions more easily and can

answer more questions from guests.

Both Green and Oswald agree that

the biggest challenge is the housekeepers’

shyness to practice their

English-speaking in public.

The class, in its second year, meets

in the Hampton Inn conference room

during lunch time.

Green states that these classes

“are not regular ESL classes but focus

on the vocabulary and phrases

that pertain to the job of a housekeeper.”

Teachers shadowed housekeepers

during several shifts, learning the key

words and phrases important for a

person performing that job. The

teachers noted the vocabulary for

furniture, linens, and the cleaning

process as well as the location of the

pool, vending machines, and newspapers.

Teachers developed a curriculum

to meet the needs of Hampton

Inn, focusing on workplace and literacy

skills.

According to Green, one of the

first challenges was finding the best

time for the class to meet.

“Lunch time has been best—

most weeks!” said Green.

“We have had to be flexible

and change days of the week

sometimes to accommodate large

groups staying at the hotel when

the housekeepers simply could not

get away all at once.

We have also had to meet in the break

room while the conference room was

filled with items to redecorate the hotel.

However, the hotel has been wonderful

to find meeting space and allow the

housekeepers to bring their lunches

and attend class.”

According to Green, both flexibility

and excellent communication with

management are indispensable when

partnering with a company to offer

work-based classes.

Teaching Adult Learners

The following outlines key instructional practices embodied in work-based literacy and work-based ESL. They reflect current “best practices” and understanding of what is most effective with adult learners, research in second language acquisition, and the instructional standards currently most prominent in the field.

Adult learners accumulate experiences that help adult learners learn and retain new information. Work-based education, and more importantly, work-based ESL, brings about error reduction in the workplace and improved capacity to use new technology. The well-planned program provides experiences that prepare adult literacy learners for work. Learning specialists consider and make the most of learners’ current work situations, the business’s needs, and the respective roles of each (Sagastizado, 2010).

Sagastizado (2010) noted that adults are: (a) moving from dependency toward self-direction, (b) life experiences help one understand new information, (c) looking for new knowledge to fulfill societal roles, (d) that adults seek immediate relevance for their learning, (e) they want incentives for taking classes, and (f) scheduling difficulties must be addressed.

Scheduling was the biggest issue that faced the employees in the research that Dr. S conducted. When employees

have to forfeit class in order to meet work needs, there was a high level of frustration. Consequently, much care has to be given to the scheduling of classes and participation of employees.

**GET AHEAD OBJECTIVES:**

**Improve Employee Productivity.**

**Better employee/manager communication.**

**Fewer employee errors.**

**To improve the quality of work.**

**To promote English language learning.**

**Improve the employee’s capacity to use new technology.**

**Higher employee loyalty to the company.**

E and F especially, needs to be addressed at the beginning of the program. Dr. Sagastizado’s research showed that if the employee goes to the class during work time; that is incentive enough.

Nonetheless, if the employee is required to go to class on their own time, incentives must be given.

*The* ***GET AHEAD*** *Learning*

*and Development Specialist meets with all involved to determine exactly how to meet the needs of all stakeholders.*

**Class Structure**

*Interactive.* Active learning provides opportunities for students to talk and listen, read, write, and reflect, as they approach course content through problem-solving exercises, informal small-group simulations, case studies, role-playing, and other activities, all of which require them to apply what they are learning (Meyers & Jones, 1993, p. xi). It is this interactivity that creates the learning environments of most ESL classrooms around the country.

*Communicative.* Larsen-Freeman (1983, p. 128–130) defined communicative approach as one in which “the target language is a vehicle for classroom communication, not just the object of study. . . . Communicative interaction encourages cooperative relationships among students. It give students an opportunity to work on negotiating meaning.”

“*Cooperative learning* works by generating varied paths of access of language and academic knowledge based on students’ interactions with each other and with the teacher. It is a way to empower them to deal with new information and forms of communication. In classrooms whose linguistic and cultural diversity are common, cooperative learning promises some of the flexibility to help students and teachers make the process of instruction more varied and personally engaging, and thus, more effective.” (McGroarty, 1993, p. 45.)

*Problem-posing and Problem-solving.* The purpose is to promote critical thinking and action. To learn how to manage time and make good decisions.

*Encouraging cultural literacy.* Helping learners develop tools -- not just language but cultural understanding and familiarity with community resources -- to function more effectively outside the classroom.

*Task-based.*

*Accommodating and flexible.* Different learner backgrounds and different learning styles are served through clear explanations; carefully designed practice and open-ended activities; individual, pair, and group activities; work that involves all language modalities (listening, speaking, reading, writing), and tasks that actively occupy learning.

*Provide accountability.*

Dr. S incorporates all the above in media-filled, hands on, *not boring* training sessions. Dr. S’s training sessions combine media, group activities, individual critical thinking, media, humor, etc. Dr. S will always search for the best of the best, whether it is a video, a life changing principle, or simply a fun way to engage the learner.

Eventually, Dr. Sagastizado would incorporate elearning tools to have some training, assessments, games, and learning available online.

**Assessment and Evaluation in Adult Work-based ESL Programs**

*Assessment* of a program refers to the use of procedures and instruments to gather information on the strengths and weakness of any given program on a regular basis (Van Duzer & Holt, 2000).

*Evaluation* refers to interpreting and analyzing data at any given point in time, usually for the purpose of improving and documenting outcomes of the program (Van Duzer & Holt, 2000).

For current purposes, OCCC has many assessment instruments that can be used for evaluation purposes: the TABE for ABE learners and the BEST Plus or BEST Literacy for ESL learners.

However, for business programs, stakeholders want to know about the implementation and success of the program. Funders of the program are concerned with how the money is spent and if the outcomes justify the funds allotted.

In evaluating adult basic education and ESL programs, Alamprese and Kay (1993) suggested that quantifiable indicators of a program’s success could include learner retention, learner promotion to higher levels of learning, or learners’ transition to jobs or better jobs. Other factors that are not easily quantifiable are increased self-esteem, along with an increase in participation in the community and school.

Likewise, if an evaluation of workplace program outcomes showed that learners had increased participation in work teams, better job attendance, and a willingness to learn new skills, the program would have successful outcomes.

Burt and Saccomano (1995) called evaluation a complex process that should involve all stakeholder groups and that evaluation must be “an integral part of workplace ESL instructional programs before, during, and after the programs have been completed. It can increase program effectiveness by providing valuable information about the impact of programs and highlighting areas where improvement is needed” (¶ 3).

The stakeholders, who can include the employers, labor unions, participants, teachers, and funders, determine how to conduct an evaluation. Stakeholders’ stated goals, expected outcomes for the program, and resources available are all criteria for evaluating an ESL program.

As Burt and Saccomano stated, ” As stakeholders may have different, possibly conflicting goals, it is important to clarify these goals and achieve a consensus beforehand as to which goals are most important to examine with the available resources” (Fitz-Gibbon & Morris, 1987).

Therefore, Dr. Sagastizado and OCCC would need to meet with Tinker stakeholders to map out a plan of action, to determine indicators, outcomes, goals, and so forth.

Summary

The following stakeholder groups: ESL adult learners, instructors, administrators, and managers will come together to create, implement, and plan a work-based ESL training program. Class structure, adult learning theory, assessment, and evaluation strategies will all be utilized.

The results will be determined that the participants will indeed; develop basic English skills to meet the literacy needs of workers. Additionally, the program will be designed to interact with Tinker’s other programs for safety and training, which is especially useful. The program understands the significance of connecting workplace vocabulary and literacy classes to provide a ready-made source of relevant, meaningful material for the adult students, serve employees more effectively, and yield greater benefits to the employer through: fewer employee errors, better communication, and higher employee loyalty to the company.

Such workplace ESL programs that are conducted on the work premises, in order to function well; must work in partnership within companies that recognize their value and assist employees in scheduling their participation.

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**Appendix**

**Learner Profile Tool GET AHEAD**

**Note:** When determining learning objectives, and designing a work-based learning and development program, it is important to have a very good understanding of the learners, in order to address the gaps that have been identified. Use the Learner Profile tool to understand the intended target audience, and to ensure that the program design is appropriate for the specific organization.

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| **Background of Learners**  - What are the age, gender, location, ethnicity, language, disability, level of education, etc. backgrounds of the learners? |  |
| **Prior Experience**  - What prior knowledge, skills, experience will they have that is relevant?  How will past experience influence their cognition and  development?  How can this experience be drawn out and integrated into the learning? |  |
| **Learners’ Objectives**  - What are the learners’ objectives for completing the program? |  |
| **Learners’ Motivation**  - What will make the program most relevant to the learners?  What will prove meaningful, and provide motivation to learn? |  |
| **Success Factors**  - What factors might affect learner success or failure in the program |  |
| **Technology**  - Do the learners have access to learning technologies (e.g. computer, CD-ROM, Internet, video, etc.)?  Are they pre-disposed to using these? |  |
| **Learning Strategies**  - How will they best learn – participation, self-reflection, activities, practice? How can different learning styles (e.g. visual, auditory, kinesthetic) be accommodated? |  |
| **Support**  - What kinds of support will be needed (academic, peer, supervisor, technical, etc.) to help ensure learner success? |  |
| **Desired Competencies**  - List the learner competencies that need to be achieved.  (State these as things that the learner will be able to do after participating in the program). |  |

**GAP Analysis of Workplace Needs GET AHEAD**

**Note**: This tool is used to meet the employer’s objectives by putting in any workplace skill or knowledge requirements that are appropriate and task specific to the work-based learning and development program. This tool helps the organization and the Learning Specialist identify key skill and knowledge gaps that must be addressed.

Data is collected by observing the workplace, interviewing key stakeholders (e.g. employees, managers, supervisors, customers, etc.), and

studying key documents (e.g. job descriptions, policy manuals, performance appraisals, trouble reports, specification documents, etc.).

Gaps are identified by comparing the existing state with the desired state. Working with stakeholders, the Learning Specialist assigns priorities to these gaps and then designs an approach to address them (see Work-based Learning Plan). This process can be done by individual workers, by position, or collectively for the entire organization.

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| **Skill / Knowledge Area** | **Data Collection** | | | **Analysis** | | |
|  | **Observation** | **Interview** | **Documentation** | **Current State** | **Desired State** | **Gap** |
| **Basic Workplace Skills**  Locates and Uses Resources  Applies Mathematical Concepts and Operations  Reads with Understanding  Writes Clearly and Concisely  Speaks Clearly and Concisely  Listens with Understanding  Observes Critically  Uses Technology  **Basic Workplace Knowledge**  Applies Health and Safety Concepts  Understands Processes and Product  **Gap Analysis of Workplace Needs**  Demonstrates Quality Consciousness  Understands Finances  Works Within Organizational Structure and Culture  **Basic Employability Skills**  Demonstrates Effective Interpersonal Relations  Demonstrates Self-Management  Strategies  Works Well in Teams  Can Solve Problems  Makes Good Decisions  **Lifelong Learning Skills**  Knows How to Learn  Manages Change  Applies Skill and Knowledge in New  Contexts |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**GET AHEAD**

**Workplace Audit Interview Questions GET AHEAD**

**Note:** As you are gathering information for the Gap Analysis of Workplace Needs, you may find the following basic skills questionaire helpful as

a framework for your interviews with the managerial and supervisory staff in the workplace. The questions may be altered to make these appropriate for the employees, too.

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|  | **Questions** | **Notes** |
| **Background** | What is the job title?  What is the job description?  How long has the employee been in the job?  How does the employee learn this job?  Is there special training for this job? Is training lacking?  How important is reading to the successful completion of this job?  How important is writing to the successful completion of this job?  How important is math to the successful completion of this job?  What do you (the employee) find is the most challenging part of your job?  What is the most important part of the job? |  |

## Work-based Learning Plan GET AHEAD

**Note:** After the Learning Specialist has done the learning needs gap analysis, and completed the learner profile, a plan is formulated on how the program will begin closing the gaps.

Use the Writing Good Objectives tool to construct learning objectives statements that can be entered below.

The Learning Specialist will then need to determine, ***together with key stakeholders in the project***, what measures will be used to monitor progress, and what targets for these measures will define success.

The key stakeholder can actually form a committee if the organization desires, to help collaborate all aspects of developing the Learning a Development Program.

How to evaluate, will need to be determined by the organization: (e.g. tests, observations, supervisor / peer / customer feedback, performance objectives, specific business objectives, etc.). To determine whether the learning intervention deployed has succeeded or not, and to what degree.

The follow-up column is where you can record successes and failures in this pursuit, and record any additional actions required.

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| **Skill / Knowledge Area** | **Objectives**  **(Closing the Gap)** | **Key Measures** | **Targets** |
| Skill Gaps Priority 1  Priority 2  etc.  Knowledge Gaps  Priority 1  Priority 2  etc. |  |  |  |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill / Knowledge Area** | **Learning Intervention** | **Evaluation Plan** | **Follow-Up** |
| Skill Gaps Priority 1  Priority 2  etc.  Knowledge Gaps  Priority 1  Priority 2  etc. |  |  |  |

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