



A STUDY ON CUSTOMISED TRAINING & ITS IMPACT THE ON EMPLOYEES TOWARDS ENHANCED SKILLS IN AN ENGINEERING PRODUCTS MARKETING COMPANY

S.Balachander* Dr. R.Jayam**

**Research Scholar, Faculty of Management Studies, St. Peters Institute For Higher Education & Research, Avadi, Chennai.*

***Deputy HOD, Department of Management Studies, Dr.MGR University, Maduravoil, Chennai.*

Abstract

This paper attempts to study the effects of training on employee, provides a review of the current evidence of such a relationship and offers suggestions for further investigation.

An extensive review of the literature in terms of research findings from studies that have been trying to measure and understand the impact that individual HR practices like “training” have on employee performance across various sectors.

Training is of growing importance to companies seeking to gain an advantage among competitors, in today’s competitive environment. There is significant debate among professionals and scholars as to the affect that training has on both employee and organizational goals. One school of thought argues that training in competencies like Communication skills and Customer relationship management leads to an increase in turnover, while the other states that training is a tool to that can lead to higher levels of employee satisfaction may lead to optimal retention (Colarelli & Montei, 1996; Becker, 1993).

Regardless of where one falls within this debate, most professionals agree that employee training is a complex human resource practice that can significantly impact a company’s success.

Some studies have found a strong positive association, some negative and some, not surprisingly, no association whatsoever. The paper findings end with directions for future research by applying different level of analysis on exploring the impact of training practices on employee competencies.

Keywords-Training and Development; Communication Skills, Customer Relationship Management.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE

Excel Enterprises, Dealers Sandvik-Cutting tools major & global player. The company wants to be the best distributor in cutting tool business, providing value to the customers, improving their productivity and profitability. As a company, excel enterprises, one of the major dealers for Sandvik, tries to focus on the manufacturing economics from the customer’s point of, view there by imparting the essential input in the areas of profitability and designing such actions which may lead to better productivity for the customers, leading to delighted customers. Also focuses to be the problem solver for the customers offering right from technical support, educating customers for application knowledge for all other basic cutting tools. Excel enterprises fortifies its efforts to build that kind of a trust with their customers, partner with them and support them in their objectives. They have personnel who can understand the needs of the customers and align themselves to support the same. Fittingly they have service engineers who understand technology and can use to “cut cost”.



Organizational Chart of Excel enterprises, Chennai, South India

PROPOSAL FOR TRAINING

I, as a trainer involved in training individuals in corporate sector, approached this company M/S Excel enterprises, Chennai, to study the feasibility to enhance the staff members output and develop them further, to become part of a leader amongst the dealers of this multinational company, M/S Sandvik Asia Ltd.

I was given the opportunity to discuss with their staff and their managing partner Mr. S.Shankar raman to get to know the development need and areas, to make this study a meaningful one. After weeklong deliberations, found some strong areas of the staff and their trainable areas for enhancing them in their routine.

TRAINING NEEDS

It was found that there was a gap in the performance of the staff members involved in developing customer support in this company adequately, who primarily is involved in developing & maintaining clients of engineering and its services producers in South India.

Even though, most of them had their technical knowledge, it was the Soft skills and CRM, their client management, which found to have improvement, as per the discussions I had with management and the interactions I had with the majority of their staff.

As it is proved “Training” refers to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies as a result of the teaching of vocational or practical skills and knowledge that relate to specific useful competencies. Training is one of the most profitable investments an institution can make. No matter what career training, the steps for an effective training process are the same and may be adapted anywhere. In developing a training program consider the following four basic training steps. All of these steps mentioned below are mutually necessary for any training program to be effective and efficient for Excel enterprises, Chennai

Training Need Assessment was done through discussions with participants, as given below

1. Through Group discussion-These enable to share comments and observations about what is happening in their institutions and what skills they feel they may need, in the presence of the trainer.

2. Having Individual discussion with participants, by the trainer
3. Giving the chance to the people to talk in confidence about difficulties they are having and things they need to learn.

Self-Assessment

This involves asking staff to list the things they think they are good at and what skill sets they think they need training on.

Based on these above said assumptions, as a first phase, we designed to train the staff of Excel Enterprises, Dealers in Engineering cutting tools and other products of Sandvik Asia Ltd; on the below given topics for a three day training program, from between February 14th to 16th, 2015.

- Communication skills
- Customer relationship management

Table 1, Analysis of the Staff Vs No. of Years of Experience

| Particulars | No. of. Staff | Percentage |
|-------------------|---------------|------------|
| less than 5 years | 11 | 34 |
| 6-8 years | 10 | 33 |
| 9-12 years | 9 | 30 |
| 13-20 years | 1 | 3 |
| Total | 31 | 100 |

Inference

From the above table, 34% of the employees have less than 5 years of experience, 33% of employees have 6-8 years of experience, 30 % of the employees have 9-12 years of experience & 3% of the employees have 13-20 years of experience.

TRAINING MODULE

The following questions will help to decide who should attend the training:

1. Do participants need to have certain skills or knowledge? Some training courses may require participants to have background knowledge.
2. Will training be relevant to participants' jobs? Participants learn best when they can see clearly how the training can be used in their lives or work.
3. Do participants have the support of instructors in excel enterprises? For training to be used in the workplace, participants need to have the support of instructors so that they can use skills and knowledge when they return to schedule.
4. Is it possible to train two people from the same area? This means that when training has ended and participants have returned to schedule they can provide each other with support.

DEVELOPING A TRAINING PROGRAM MANUAL

This step establishes the development of current training descriptions and standards and procedures. Training descriptions should be clear and concise and may serve as a major training tool for the identification of guidelines. Once the training description is completed, a complete list of standards and procedures should be established from each responsibility outlined in the training description. This will standardize the necessary guidelines for any future training.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to the time constraint the study is made only among 31 respondents. The findings are based on the view of the respondents cannot be generalized. There is a chance of personal bias which affects the original data.

EXPLORING THE TRAINING PROCESS

Training is a means of communicating new knowledge and skills and changing attitudes. It can raise awareness and provide people with the opportunity to explore their existing knowledge and skills. There are many different kinds of training for many different audiences, including service providers and service users. As well as giving people new skills and knowledge, and maintaining existing skills, training can:

- Increase trainees/participants confidence.
- Confirm to people the value of what they are already doing.
- Enable people to pass on new skills to colleagues in the workplace.
- Raise general awareness.
- Change people's attitudes.
- Improve morale.

HOW COULD THE EMPLOYEES OF EXCEL ENTERPRISES IMPROVE THEIR SKILLS

So as a trainer, I found that by training employees in how to take full advantage of flexible ways of working one will gain committed, motivated and more effective staff. Whether training involves existing teams or mixed groups, our input help them understand the values and vision for the new working environment and the actions they need to take to implement it. The training needs can be met either by our training programmes & workshops that are customized to the requirements. They are practical with short inputs, tips for success and ample opportunities to try out ideas and practice skills in a safe environment. The aim is to create a strong bridge between delivery of business needs and the requirement to behave in different ways, so that the objective of improved performance is seen as a reality after training the employees at Excel Enterprises.

By attending this workshop, it was presumed that the participants at Excel enterprises will be able to:

- Build the business case for new and flexible ways of working: including remote and mobile working
- Identify the changes in procedures, practices, management, communication and culture that are needed to achieve maximum productivity
- Develop SMART objectives for flexible working and a plan for the changes required
- Develop an Evaluation Matrix for identifying the business benefit and a review process

As a Participant one will benefit from this workshop by

- Examining on the management competences needed in the new working context
- Benchmarking against this need and identifying areas for change
- Exploring specific competences in more detail building on existing skills and practices
- Developing a personal action plan

TRAINING MODULE ON COMMUNICATION SKILLS

In the first phase, as planned given training to the staff at Excel Enterprises on "Communication Skills",
The Agenda on the White Board

Day 1 I session: Strengthening Communication

1. Context Setting (1hour)
2. Sharing the Vision
3. Discussing Deployment Pattern.

2. Communication: (3hours)

- Written Communication
- Verbal Communication
- Listening
- Body Language
- Assertiveness

Day 2: Business communication (2 hours)

- Business Etiquette
- Introduction to Values and Business Ethics
- Team work and Diversity



- CRM-What's it? (1 hour)
- Day 3: Conduct Focus group discussions on Aha Moments! (4 hours)
- Customer focus (1 Hour)
 - Customer satisfaction, Delight! (1 Hour)

I - LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR COMMUNICATION SKILLS WERE:

- Given a participative lecture, participants will identify characteristics of effective COMMUNICATION skills.
- Through a group activity and a large group discussion, participants will identify barriers to active listening IN COMMUNICATION.
- Through a group activity and given a participative lecture, participants will explain the importance of effective Communication in providing high-quality customer service.
- Through an individual activity and participative lecture, participants will identify the strengths and weaknesses in their communication styles.

II LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR CRM

Customer relationship management (CRM) has the business purpose of intelligently finding, marketing, selling to and servicing customers. CRM is a broadly used term that covers concepts used by companies, and public institutions to manage their relationships with customers and stakeholders. Technologies that support this business purpose include the capture, storage and analysis of customer, vendor, partner, and internal process information. Functions that support this business purpose include Sales, Marketing and Customer Service, Training, Professional Development, Performance.

WHO IS A CUSTOMER?

The participants were trained on the fundamentals of CRM as follows,
Customer is also called as:(1) If you are running a company, then you have paying clients. Against the payment, you provide them products and/or services. (2) Every establishment has employees. They are paid salary and other benefits including bonus and in return, they give their service for productive work. (3) Suppliers provide raw materials and/or services required for manufacture for which they are paid by the company.

In short, customer is an individual or group with whom you exchange values. In today's world a company can survive only if they can manage to keep its customers happy. Building a customer environment and using other means to maintain customer attention have now become the top priorities for any company that wants to make it big in the market. As technology changes, more people all over the world have started buying and selling activities over the Internet. As a consequence companies also have to give customers a good in easy online environment. The result is nothing but CRM.

NEED OF CRM

(a) Comprehensive: CRM does not belong to just sales or marketing. It is not the sole responsibility of customer service group or an IT team; i.e. CRM must be a way of doing business that touches all the areas.

(b) Approach: An approach is broadly a way of treating or dealing with something. CRM is a way of thinking about and dealing with the customer relationship. We can also use the word strategy because CRM involves a clear plan. In fact, CRM strategy can usually serve as a benchmark for other strategies in your organization, because any strategy sets directions for your organization. We can also consider this from a department or area level. Just as a larger organization have strategies for shareholder management, marketing etc. Each strategy must support managing customer relationships.

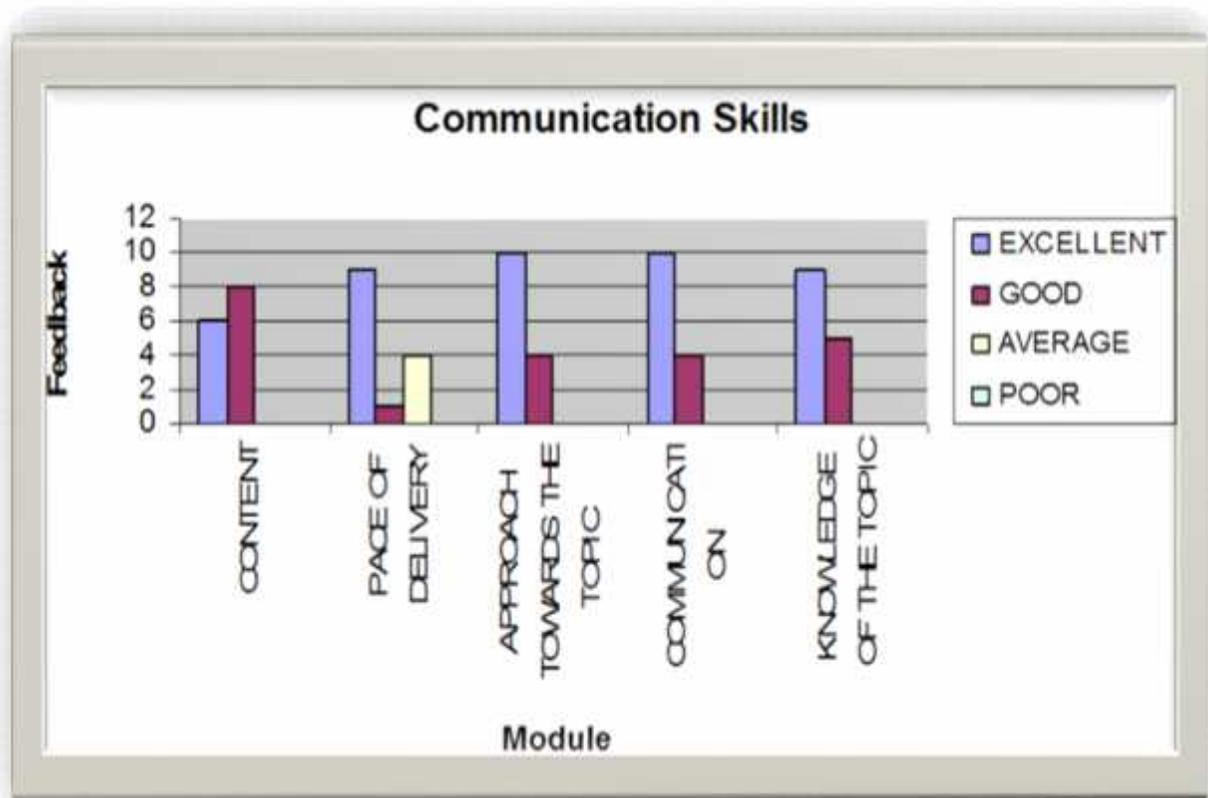
CRM is not just a technology, but rather a comprehensive approach to an organization's philosophy in dealing with its customers. This includes policies and processes, front-of-house customer service, employee training, marketing, systems and information management. Hence, it is important that any CRM implementation considerations stretch beyond technology, towards the broader organizational requirements.

The objectives of a CRM strategy must consider a company’s specific situation and its customer’s needs and expectations. The data gathered as a part of CRM must consider customer privacy and data security. Customers want the assurance that their data is not shared with third parties without their consent and not accessed illegally by third parties. Customers also want their data used by companies to provide a benefit to them.

TRAINING FEEDBACK

Table - 2 Communication Skills

| MODULE | Feedback Excellent | Good | Average | Poor |
|------------------------|--------------------|------|---------|------|
| Content | 6 | 8 | | |
| Pace of delivery | 9 | 1 | 4 | |
| Approach towards topic | 10 | 4 | | |
| Communication | 10 | 4 | | |
| Knowledge of the topic | 9 | 5 | | |



Communication skills

Inference

The above Table and Figure reveals that the approach towards the topic was satisfying the need with the trainers knowledge of the module in Communication Skill Training.

PARTICIPANTS' FEEDBACK FOR THE TRAINING PROGRAM

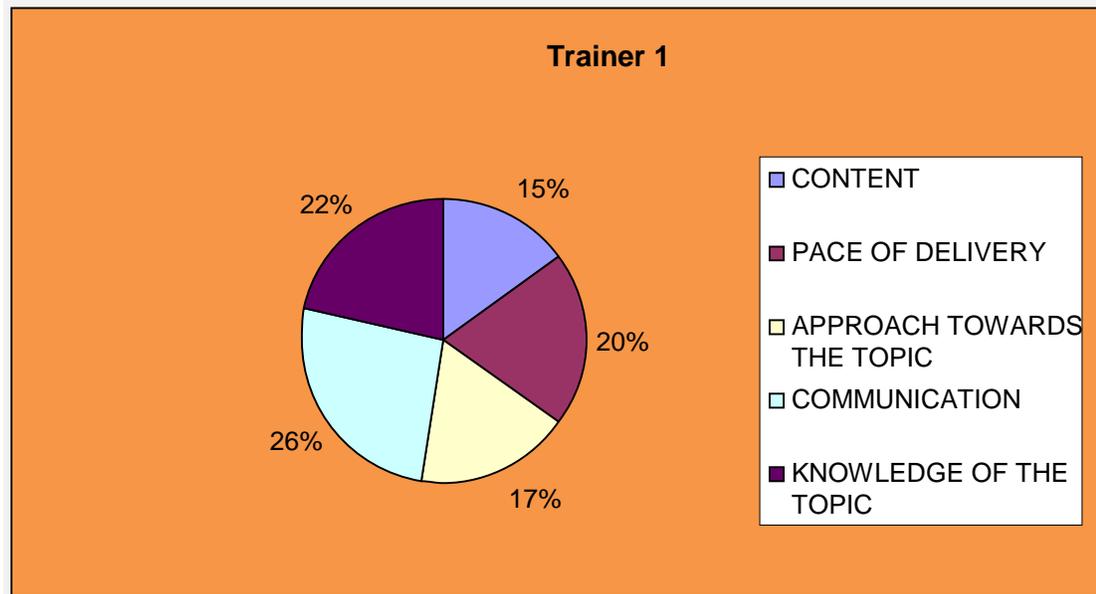


Table – 3, Customer Service Development

| Module | Feedback | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------|------|---------|------|
| | Excellent | Good | Average | Poor |
| Customer Service Development | | | | |
| Content | 7 | 7 | 3 | |
| Pace of delivery | 9 | 7 | 1 | |
| Approach towards the topic | 8 | 7 | 2 | |
| Communication | 12 | 4 | 1 | |
| Knowledge on the topic | 10 | 5 | 2 | |

Inference

The above Table and Figure reveals that the participants had a good understanding of the module and it also was suggestive that the Trainer had adequate knowledge on the topic and the pace of delivery of the module in the Customer Service Development Training had brought the desired result in this first session of training.

CASE STUDY 1

Ms. Kaveri, a 35 years old UG Graduate working as an Internal Sales Staff, with rich experience. Ms. Jaya is the sales department for last 3yrs. Ms. Jaya is also a record as a sales “superstar.” She has a bachelor’s degree, recently passed her MBA exam, and is really exceptional in her knowledge. She was so good, in fact, that she was promoted to department manager in her previous company after only two years on the job. She has been at her current company for ten months. She has implemented two procedural changes that have streamlined the work and resulted in cost savings for the company.

She reports to the “Branch Manager”, and he is concerned about Ms.Jaya’s, talents. There is no denying that she has had a positive impact, but Ms.Jaya is not fitting in so well. Ms.Jaya is a poor communicator and seems to have alienated quite a few of her peers and her employees.

She is often aloof and distant, and her usual way of communicating was to simply dictate “what will be done” and expected compliance with her orders. She has good ideas but has little ability to present them well or to work as part of a team. The participants were given this case and asked to react, in groups and as individuals as below:

1. You are Ms.Kaveri’s boss, and you believe you can coach Ms. Kaveri?
2. How would you approach her and what would you say?
3. What issues would you work with her on?
4. How would you hold Ms. Kaveri accountable for improvement on the issues you identified?
5. How will you adapt if one among you is to be Ms. Kaveri?

Solution: Participants emphasized more on the rapport building, empathizing towards her coworkers and towards the client, Practice it consciously in the work place as well as in the personal life to enhance her one to one relationship.

Majority of the participants felt that it is possible to change the attitude of Ms. Kaveri. They had a common opinion on Ms. Kaveri’s, attitude, by inducting knowledge on Interpersonal skills and engage her to interact with the peer group using refined expression. Instead of saying a negative metaphor in her communication, participants felt that she can be trained on the positive approach for instance,. if she finds something wrong in the team or its individuals instead of saying “You are wrong” she can use alternate, positive effective expressions like, “What I think I heard you say is.... I’m not sure if I agree with this point, can you please explain more?”

Few of the participants were reluctant going through this hypothetical situation, if they were in Ms. Kaveri’s position, because they felt their behavioural patterns would be based on their brought up and attitude, which may take a longer time to adapt to the situation, whereas, many accepted to point, had a perception towards the change in the behavioural pattern, believed by not antagonizing her team, showcasing her ideas, getting the results she wanted is very much possible for Ms Kaveri.

6.1.2 CASE STUDY 2

Mr. Xavier, 44 years old with 18 years’ experience. He wanted to find a way to give his customers better service, and to make his customer service processes more consistent and efficient. Many months ago, he had realised that his customers weren't getting the best possible service from him. The same problems were recurring, causing unnecessary downtime (and expense to him) - and he wasn’t doing anything systematic or rigorous to prevent them. He was also failing to make customers' systems really meet their needs – He was guessing what his clients and businesses needed, instead of questioning and listening to them. He knew that he ought to be doing these things, and had gone through the motions of doing them, but they were ad hoc, occasional, unsystematic approaches. The participants during the training program were given this case and asked to react, in groups and as individuals as below.

Why listening skills are important for CRM?

What kind of process should as CRM have?

How to build rapport with existing clients, lay foundation for future clients?

Solution-suggested by the trainees: Participants realised that the Communication with clients can help companies achieve strategic business goals. They were having a common view that by changing the way the view on clients and understanding their needs can enhance their knowledge about the customers/ Clients and use their communications.

Almost everyone had a view that there should be a structured process, not only for the person referred in the case as Mr. Xavier, but for all, in attending the customer in person or telephone as well. There should be periodical follow up with their visit days, information exchange, need analysed, service and products sought, additional technical support required and their feedback. The participants were in the common view that each communication with their clients namely, invoice, bill or notification is a customer touch point. Anything that



provides customers with an opportunity to interact with the company is a touch point, and these can directly affect how the customers perceive your brand and their overall customer experience. The participants stressed that there should therefore a simple method to document client visits by personnel, phone call interactions with them & complaints and action planned for every customer is vital, this will be a powerful document.

They further felt that by recognizing each customer-facing document as an important touch point with their brand, companies can make the customer experience a top priority. The key to success in optimizing the customer experience is finding the right business partner. The right partner will help one to unleash valuable opportunities in their communications, increasing customer satisfaction, retention and profitability They were in strong opinion that one should not guess what the customer and his or her business needs. Ask questions and start listening, understand from their point of view and strategize action plans.

Focus on what really matters to the customer, and drop the things that don't. They thoughtfully felt that if the message is confusing or fails to engage the customer, the brand takes a hit. Negative outcomes run the gamut from payment delays and increased support calls to costly customer defection.

CONCLUSION

The results after these first set of training for three days revealed that there is definite change in the behavioral patterns of the staff, their understanding of communication skills and its applications along with the need for an effective CRM , and opened the scope for future training sessions, may be planned in the coming months ,would do a lot in building their competencies in these areas. The management has also willingly come forward to develop the competencies of the staff through training on these soft skills and the next session is planned for leadership and interpersonal skills, in probably I week of April.

The employees showed lot of interest in improving the skills and knowledge through training programs. So, I would like to conclude that the staff of M/S Excel enterprises are good in their competencies but planned trainings focusing on the quality of training, different kinds of training to different levels of employees, modes of training/training methods, Also the trainings should not only be focused on improving skills but also should help the employees in making their career aspirations true.

Directions for Future Research

The study can be conducted on a larger population, other similar distributors of Sandvik Asia distributor network. A comparative study can be drawn with any other company or the study can be conducted across the organizations in similar kind of service industry at independent department/s levels and employee levels to get further more accurate information.