

Business and Financial Operations

Training and Development Specialists

Training and Development Specialists work at attracting and retaining high quality employees, which is an essential component of effectively running a business. Companies hire Training and Development Specialists to manage this core function. They create, procure, and conduct specific training and development programs for employees as well as match them to the jobs to which they are best suited. This serves as a way of enhancing productivity, morale, quality of work, and building worker loyalty in order to limit job turnover. Enhancing employee skills or knowledge can increase individual and organizational performance and help to achieve business results which will give a company a competitive edge in recruiting.

Trainers work with supervisors to improve their interpersonal skills and to deal effectively with employees. They may set up individualized training plans to strengthen employees' existing skills or teach new ones. Training specialists may set up leadership or executive development programs for employees who aspire to move up in the organization. They lead programs to assist employees with job transitions as a result of mergers or consolidation, as well as retraining programs to develop new skills that may result from technological changes in the work place. In government-supported job-training programs, training specialists serve as case managers and provide basic job skills to prepare participants to function in the labor force.

Responsibilities include planning, monitoring, evaluating and recording a wide range of training activities in order to determine program effectiveness. Training and Development Specialists assess training needs through surveys, interviews with employees, focus groups, or consultation with managers, instructors or customer representatives. If consultations with employee supervisors demonstrate that current training methods do not result in the expected improvements they must develop alternative training methods to help the organization meet its strategic goals and achieve results. Training and Development Specialists will sometimes have input in the changing of company policies.

Their position includes the organization and development of companies' training procedure manuals, team exercises, videos, lectures, and guides. Their duties also involve designing the direct orientation and training for employees or customers of industrial and commercial establishments. In addition to the task of monitoring training costs to ensure budget is not exceeded, Training and Development Specialists are required to prepare budget reports to justify expenditures. Depending on the size, goals, and nature of the organization, trainers may differ considerably in their responsibilities and in the methods they use. Training methods vary by whether the training predominantly is knowledge-based (usually conducted in a classroom setting) or skill-based (often hands-on instruction and demonstration) or some combination of the two.

Dealing with people is an important part of the job, so an outgoing personality or good people-skills is necessary. Training and Development Specialists must keep abreast of advances in learning theory which provide insights into how people learn and how training can be organized most effectively; the rapid pace of organizational and technological change; and the growing number of jobs in fields that constantly generate new knowledge and, thus, require new skills. They must understand the complexity of the work environment in order to identify and assess training needs. Planning and program development is an essential part of the training specialist's job.

Increasingly, Training and Development Specialists have been designing training programs for their clients that involve interactive Internet-based training modules that can be downloaded for either individual or group instruction, for dissemination to a geographically dispersed class, or to be coordinated with other multimedia programs. These technologies allow participants to take advantage of distance learning alternatives and to attend conferences and seminars through satellite or Internet communications hookups, or use other computer-aided instructional technologies, such as those for the hearing-impaired or sight-impaired.

The regular work schedule for many training specialists is a standard 40-hour week. However, longer hours are sometimes necessary when contract agreements or dispute resolutions are being negotiated. Workshops and training sessions may involve a lot of time on foot giving lectures or presenting training material.

Education/Training

How to Obtain:

A bachelor's degree and/or master's degree through a four year college or university are required. Many colleges and universities do not offer degree programs specializing in Training and Development until the graduate degree level.

In addition, some training and development specialists may opt to get an American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) certification, called the Certified Professional in Learning & Performance (CPLP). Requirements include:

- Passing a knowledge-based exam
- Work product submission
- At least three years of successful work experience.

More Information on Certification:

- American Society for Training and Development
<http://www.astd.org/content/ASTDcertification/>

Average Costs:

Tuition and fees for a master's degree earned at an accredited public university in an area such as Training and Development or Human Resources Management costs an average of \$11,400* per year. Completion time is generally 2 years.

Certification fees for the CPLP are: \$799 - \$999 plus the cost of exam study aids.

* Note: This figure does not include federal, state, or university financial aid resources such as grants, fellowships, scholarships or work study. It also does not include vocational rehabilitation or other state resources available specifically to people with disabilities. The out-of-pocket expense may be significantly less.