competency catalysts

Want your training setup to scale along with your company's growth?
Here's how.

Training is a key enabler of growth in a services organization and hence its effectiveness could be one of the key determinants of how seamlessly a company can scale its operations.

In reality however, many organizations are unable to put in place the right training model/processes/frameworks that will help them manage growth. There are many instances where organizations do a good job of training when they are small (typically less than 200 employees). Such organizations typically have practitioners volunteering time. This is supplemented by a well-structured mentoring program.

However, once the employee strength crosses 250-300, these semi-formal arrangements become inadequate. For one, as the number of trainees increases, the bandwidth of practitioners gets stretched and they are no longer able to do full justice. To get the numbers, very often people who are available are pulled into training, though they may not necessarily have the right aptitude or the passion for teaching. This then defeats the purpose and makes the training ineffective.

Second, as an organization grows, laterals are also hired. A more structured program may be needed to integrate them into the organization; the practitioner model may neither be sufficient nor its value appreciated.

Third, as the number of part-time trainers increases, issues of lack of standardization and consistency of training methods come to the fore.

Furthermore, as the organization's scale increases, and training assumes greater importance, it is critical to clearly define what is expected of the function. In the absence of explicitly articulated goals, the effectiveness of the function diminishes.

For all these reasons, services organizations need to focus explicitly on formalizing training methods as they prepare for growth. Here are some of the steps they would need to take:

- Create a group responsible for design and delivery of training; this group could be a formal training department with necessary skills or a team of cross functional professionals drawn from the delivery organization chartered with the training responsibility

- Identify the outcomes expected of training - for instance, in software development it could be defined as reducing cost of quality (review, testing, re-work, etc.) from 35% to 30%

- Identify and define clearly the competencies that would help the role holders address the defined performance target

- Design courseware in line with the identified and defined competencies

- Ensure standardization of courseware with the same material being used for all offerings

- Train a group of trainers through a 3-step process: (a)attend and complete a course offering diligently like a participant (b) co-deliver with an experienced trainer (c) deliver training independently with an experienced trainer serving as an observer

- Fine tune the process and then let the trainers independently train

In essence, the requirements for success are clarity of what needs to be accomplished and a robust set of processes to implement the content development and delivery.

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