

## **Training**

Any training is good for you. Or is it? Of course, the answer is "no". The correct training certainly is but, all too often, training can be wasted effort and wasted money.

Why does waste happen? Frequently, because the training is misdirected. For example, the course covers a topic which is of no benefit or interest; there was no point in attending but "someone thought that the firm should be seen to be there". Waste also happens because of the quality of the instruction. Lecturers are chosen because of their technical knowledge, not because of their skill in delivery.

The best training is that which fulfils a need within the organisation, and the individual and which instructs in such a way that genuinely improves knowledge and/or skills.

Each individual ought to have some form of Training Plan or Chart which dovetails with a review of the appraisal of the individual. For example, see Appendix I.

Solicitors should take care to ensure that they do receive the right training, from whichever source this may come. They do not have the time to waste on anything less.

Training has to be planned in order to be effective, preferably over a longer period of time than is covered by the inserts in the latest "Journal". It is important that it is adequately funded and it is unlikely that a sum representing less than one half of one percent of the firm's total expenses is adequate.

## **The Objectives**

Business goals and targets should be clearly set out in a written but flexible business plan which should outline what the requirements of the firm are in terms of personnel. If one believes that the most important asset of any firm is its people, then this plan should cover all levels and types of personnel. The plan should recognise what key skills and competences the firm will require in the future and the responsibility for developing people must be clearly identified. This written plan provides a document which you can share with your colleagues and staff. They can really understand the direction of the business and feel part of a team that is co-ordinated and works together to achieve common goals.

## **Appraisal**

Perhaps a most underused yet valuable source of reviewing personnel and one which is commended. Whilst you may work closely with colleagues on a day-to-day basis and therefore do not see or agree with the need to carry out some formal review, the benefit of a formal appraisal is to provide an opportunity to focus for both the appraiser and appraisee key issues such as:

- the development of that individual and indeed appraisal does not stand alone but stands as part of a mechanism whereby future performance can be measured;

- there does, however, also require to be the opportunity for development and in that respect, see Development Plan, Appendix II.

### **Job Descriptions**

Job descriptions should be prepared for each job and job-holder. These should define key result areas and give the performance criteria in order to determine the basic level of competence required. Consideration of these criteria will also assist in performance review, see Appendix III.

### **Training Needs Analysis**

An analysis of the training needs of the firm should be made in order to look at any gaps in the skills required and what will have to be done to fill these. Such analysis can be done for the firm and each individual. Simply we analyse what is required and what currently happens, the difference between the two is identified as the training need. When determining training needs analysis these questions must be addressed:

1. What are the firm's objectives ?
2. What tasks have to be completed to achieve them ?
3. What deficiencies and weaknesses do job-holders have in their current knowledge and skills in order to carry out these tasks ?
4. What would be the most effective means of improving deficiencies and weaknesses?
5. What is the cost ?

### **Performance Review**

Performance review is a crucial part of the training process. It assists both the firm and the individual to identify training and development needs and it should suggest the method of how this should be achieved e.g. external training course or internal training activity. In itself, performance review is a skill that has to be acquired and necessary training should be given so that best possible result should be achieved.

### **Individual Training Plan**

This plan should document agreed activities. The plan should identify the following :

- What is hoped to be achieved from the training or development agreed ?

- What business goal or target does it relate to ?
- Will the training or development be carried out externally or internally ?
- When will it be completed ? (it is important that a target time for completion is set).
- Who will support the training or development to be carried out ?
- How much will it cost ?

### **Training Record & Evaluation**

Every individual should have a training record which will include attendance records completed for all training and development activity. The training record provides evidence of training and development for competence purposes. Evaluation forms should normally be completed for every course or activity so that assessment can then be made of the value of the training.

### **Training Methods**

The common method used is that of external courses. These can be very useful because the trainer is often specialised in a particular area and skilled in delivering the course. It also allows discussion of experience and knowledge with other people on the course. However it can be expensive in terms of money and fee-earning time.

Another excellent method is internal or "in-house" training, whether it is within a firm, with one or more other firms, or within a faculty. Most solicitors have some specialised knowledge which others will benefit from. It is worth remembering that preparation and delivery time of a lecture can be claimed as CPD.

There are many other methods :-

- Getting an outside expert to come in at lunchtime and give a free talk over sandwiches.
- Distance Learning
- Secondments
- Further education classes on relevant areas
- Computer based interactive learning

### **Dissemination**

Shortly after attending a course the delegate should be asked to present an "in-house" seminar and circulate any papers. The work involved in presenting a seminar assists in

focusing that person's mind upon the material which was presented and their understanding of it. If the seminar can be run in such a way that it is interactive it will be the more valuable. An additional benefit will be that the person presenting the internal course thereby has challenge to meet and will benefit from doing so. Again, preparation and delivery time can be claimed by the presenter as CPD.

### **Why Training Suffers**

Firstly because it is difficult to demonstrate short-term positive results. There is a long pay-back period and , when times are hard, this is difficult to justify.

Secondly, until November 1993 there was no special course, no requirement to train. Even now, CPD touches only a very small proportion of those who work in solicitors' firms. Everyone in a firm should at least be eligible for training.

### **Points to remember**

- Prepare training plans that are linked with the business goals and targets of the firm.
- Relate training to job requirements.
- Performance reviews will assist in identifying training needs.
- Do not overlook internal expertise.
- Do not expect an immediate payback from training courses as benefits may take some time to emerge.

**NB. It is a common belief that training staff results in them leaving and going to other firms. To those who think this I would ask what happens if you don't train your staff and they stay ?**

**COMPANY NAME**

**INDIVIDUAL TRAINING PLAN**

**[Employee Name]**

What do you hope to achieve from the training or development agreed? (1)

What business goal or target does this relate to: (2)

How will the training or development be carried out? (3)

When will it be completed? (4)

Who will support you? (5)

How much will it cost? (6)

After the Training:

Have you learned what you set out to learn?

What effect has this had on your performance?

What effect has it had on the business goal/target in row (2)?  
(7)

**THIS INDIVIDUAL TRAINING PLAN HAS BEEN FULLY DISCUSSED AND AGREED BETWEEN:**

..... (Signature)

..... (Signature)

## APPENDIX II

**COMPANY NAME**

1. Do you fully understand the requirements of your Job?
2. What principal achievement have you made since the last appraisal was carried out?
3. What particular difficulties have you faced in carrying out your job?
4. Please describe the parts of your job which you feel that you discharge best, less well or not at all?
5. Where do you have abilities which are not being fully used?
6. Do you think that you give your clients a good service, if so, in what ways and in what ways could the service be improved?
7. What steps do you take to contribute to marketing the business?
8. In what ways do you see your career developing over the next 2 years?
9. What training and further education or support do you think you require to achieve those objectives;

**COMPANY NAME**

**SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION**

- Full Job Title
- Principal functions and purpose of job to be specified
- Duties and responsibilities - itemise different aspects such as:
  - organisational
  - functional
  - control
  - development
- Quality assurance related responsibilities