

EVOLUTION

OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

in the Outsourced Contact Centre world

A WNS PERSPECTIVE



Evolution of Training and Development in the Outsourced Contact Centre World

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In the early days of outsourcing, the primary focus of Training and Development (T&D) was to provide accent training and comprehensive technical training. Traditionally, the job of the T&D team ended with new hire training, apart from being intermittently called upon to fix performance gaps identified on the work floor. The focus was to ensure that go-live timelines were maintained and performance sustained. However, with the changing market dynamics and emergence of new technologies, the paradigms for T&D have changed. T&D can no longer function as a separate department; it is a critical element of the supply chain for any business.

T&D as a Business Partner

Although T&D is not a revenue centre, it is imperative that it partners with the business to manage performance and own delivery. T&D itself needs to function like a business and this can be achieved in the following ways:

- Craft and align the T&D strategy with the business strategy and values – key output measures need to mirror the business requirements instead of existing in isolation

- Create proactive systems to identify potential challenges and risks and provide appropriate and sustainable resolutions
- Adopt a metric-driven approach and establish strong governance
- Re-define the role of T&D specialists
- Identify and implement best available technology solutions to transform training practices

Value on Metrics

“The ultimate payoff or added value of an employee’s learning experience is how well he or she performs on the job,” says David S. Bushnell, in his article ‘Input, Process, Output: A Model for Evaluating Training’ in the 1990 Training and Development Journal. Unfortunately, a majority of the T&D teams focus mainly on two steps to measure training effectiveness, i.e., Level 1: Feedback, that are ‘happy sheets’ or participants’ reactions to the program, and Level 2: Learnings, that are training assessment scores to check the knowledge or skills at the end of the program. Even in evolved organisations, most of the T&D teams fail to capture Level 3, which is Job Application. Level 4, which translates job application to measurable results, remains a distant dream. While considerable

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investment is made in training, the returns remain ambiguous.

To achieve its objectives, T&D needs to define its input / output measures and critical-to-process metrics. An effective Business Process Management (BPM) can serve as a holistic approach that drives business effectiveness and efficiency, while striving for innovation, flexibility and integration with technology.

Additionally, methodologies such as Six Sigma and LEAN can be deployed to improve processes continuously. LEAN can be deployed to reduce training time lines significantly with improved output. Six Sigma can help improve effectiveness of training systems and processes.

Technology as Transformer of Learning Methodologies

Technological advances have transformed the way we live and work – we have greater flexibility, are extensively networked in a flat, diverse and virtual world. This transformation and its relevance must be evaluated at two levels – the customer and the learner.

An irate passenger today can instantly ‘tweet’ about an unpleasant flight

experience such as delayed baggage. This exerts additional pressure on the business to be faster, more effective and drive customer satisfaction. The need to disseminate information instantaneously within the business has never been greater. Traditional methods of classroom training, update sessions and team huddles fail to provide neither time nor mass advantage. With global operations, the need is for greater reach, faster delivery at less cost.

Secondly, the learner characteristics have changed. With the explosion of social media and advent of informal learning channels, today’s trainee is a Web 2.0 savvy learner who wants to learn at his pace and in his way. Does T&D have the relevant technology and tools to engage the learner and provide on-demand solutions mirroring the social media? It is imperative that T&D stays current with the tools and technologies, because the new generation in the workplace is going to expect it and the business will demand it.

Learning management systems and e-learning solutions supported with game-based learning, simulations, wikis, blogs, podcasts and mobile learning will not only be critical to drive and sustain learning, but also provide a competitive advantage to the organisation.

Age of the Learning Professional

The trainer has become extinct; today is the age of the ‘Learning Professional’ – technology-savvy innovator, agile, networked and ready to lead the change. While mastery of the T&D concepts is essential, failure to use technology and adapt to business dynamics may spell doom.

The Learning Professional needs to play a multitude of roles with ease: He is the business partner to operations; has his eye on training practices globally; can provide tangible solutions; and most importantly, keeps adding to his repertoire of training capabilities, whether it is consultation, diagnosis, content design, delivery or evaluation.

Leading the Change

In conclusion, to be an invaluable business partner to a competitive global Contact Centre group, T&D will need to strategise, make appropriate investments in developing scalable technology solutions supported with building capabilities for the Learning Professional. To succeed, T&D will need to stay out in front of the change and lead it. ▲

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