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## PRIORITIZED STAFF SKILLS FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT TRAINING PROGRAM

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### SUMMARY

While environmental enforcement training programs will necessarily vary widely in size and funding, a successful training program must have skilled personnel with specified responsibilities. The skills held by employees should help define the organization's structure, and determine its duties. This paper outlines key personnel skills upon which to build an environmental enforcement training program. In order to make this model useful to smaller and newly formed programs, the critical employee skills are presented in a prioritized order. A skilled employee foundation will breed success, no matter the size of a particular program. The central concept promoted in this paper is to be specific and comprehensive when making adjustments to staff within a training organization.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Any one enforcement officer with an audience can be a trainer. Any two people working together for training purposes could be called an enforcement training organization - this represents the simplest training program structure. Fifty persons placed together, all doing training, can be just as *simple* an organization as the two people. Yes, the large group will likely have more resources and products, but if it has only a simplistic approach to goals and staffing, the large group may not differ from the small group. What distinguishes successful training programs is the level of structured and coordinated efforts – not the size the group. The work of two persons, well planned and coordinated, can have the impact of ten persons who work independently toward no particular goals.

### 2 STAFF DEVELOPMENT VERSUS COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Because this paper is focused upon staff skills, the list below does not follow a normal sequence used to prepare training materials for delivery. For example, the first step in course development is analysis, though the importance of having an Analyst on staff is listed later. Likewise, a Manager (later priority) would typically meet with a Designer before the Subject Matter Expert or a Developer (highest priorities) was involved. When assembling a staff, versus a training course, it is helpful to distinguish the course development processes from needed staff skills. The methods used to deliver training have changed drastically over the past

decade. The traditional means of teaching (*i.e.*, a notebook or a chalkboard) are still useful and remain among the most effective. However, increasingly, new and revised course materials are rapidly needed, and large audiences are widely distributed. Technology offers a means to meet those needs more quickly, while enhancing the impact and interaction. All skills in this paper assume some proficiency with hardware (computer, camera, telecommunication, etc.) and software (word processing, databases, graphical representations, etc.). Sometimes, staff improvement goals must start with the improvement of basic *productivity-related* skills, such as computer usage, project management, budgeting, or setting priorities – before *training-related* skills can be substantially improved.

### **3 PRIORITIZED PERSONNEL SKILLS**

Because a small enforcement program may not have all the specialized skills needed to form a large and sophisticated training team, it must choose which skills to develop within its group. If given a choice, a program should select persons with skills that would enhance any current staff capabilities. Following is a list of particular skills related to personnel positions that a comprehensive organization would need in order to offer a full range of training products and services. The list also places those skills in a priority order so that organizations can build step-by-step upon a few initial positions.

#### **4 SKILL 1: SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTISE**

If there were just one person to form a training “program,” it must be a person who knows the technical topics to be taught – this person is often called the Subject Matter Expert. Without a topical Expert, there can be no training. It is common for enforcement training programs to be formed by simply assembling field investigators who have an interest in training. Unfortunately, the other skills that support effective training (*e.g.*, material formatting, collaboration, presentation skills) may not be strong capabilities of those same Experts. There are boring attorneys or investigators who do a lot of low quality presentations, simply because they know the subject matter better than others. If there is limited availability of good presenters, this may be an unavoidable situation. Low quality training may still be worthwhile when it is the only means for inspectors, attorneys, case developers, managers, and others, to learn.

If possible, the enforcement Subject Matter Experts should be assigned to another unit, such as a separate legal or technical program within the enforcement program, rather than placed with the core training team. However, Subject Matter Experts need to remain available to advise the training program because they are critical for the development of good training. The Subject Matter Expert’s primary roles are collecting and summarizing the technical issues, and helping to determine the scope of topics to be covered in training. Such a support role allows Experts from many different areas to be occasional contributors to training, while maintaining their primary technical or legal duties. If one Subject Matter Expert

leads all training, then the program will be limited to whatever skills that Expert might have. For example, an attorney who is a good trainer and presenter, would likely struggle to lead the training on industrial technology topics that are very familiar to a field inspector. It is no fault of an Expert that she/he cannot cover all issues within the entire environmental enforcement realm. Having Experts available from other organizations also allows training resources to be expended directly and exclusively upon training. Mixing the training and technical program staffs and budgets may mean that funds and efforts are likely to be dispersed away from training to address technical or other issues.

## **5 SKILL 2: MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT**

Central to training is the creation of materials for presentation. A materials Developer should be able to format content, layout presentations, write computer programming code, edit graphics, and package materials for distribution. A Developer need not be familiar with the particular content being presented. One Developer, working together with various Experts providing technical content, can be the means to produce training on a wide range of topics. If the Subject Matter Experts were placed in separate legal or technical divisions, as discussed above, then the Developer position would be the primary building block for establishing a training program.

## **6 SKILL 3: MATERIALS DESIGN**

Detailed technical topics (from an Expert) and good materials format (from a Developer) do not guarantee learning. An often overlooked aspect of training success is ensuring that the training has intentional form and achievable objectives. Training objectives should be clear, measurable, and have specific desired outcomes. Outcomes should be aimed at employee performance improvement in a certain area.

In the role of project manager, the Designer becomes the “liaison and interpreter” between the Subject Matter Expert and the Developer. Together they form the course agenda. The Designer applies his knowledge of learning theory, instructional design principles, and experience with various formats and technologies to ensure quality and appropriateness within and across materials. A delivery format should not be selected simply to use the “latest” technology. A Designer should also ensure that students interact with the training material. Interactions should lead the students to practically apply the learning through exercises. For example, providing a set of facts that present a case study allows both investigators and attorneys to apply learning to a specific and realistic situation. At the end of the training cycle, a Designer will lead revision of materials based upon evaluations.

## 6.1 Design and Development Notes

The largest portion of workload for a training program should be the development of materials. If there were a staff limit of three persons to form a training program, then the best selection of personnel positions likely would be: two Developers and one Designer (assuming that Subject Matter Experts are available from another program). One Designer could work with multiple Experts to send materials to multiple Developers. Generally, the proportion of Developers on staff should be higher than other positions in order to prevent productivity from slowing down during the longer development phase.

A training organization ideally should allow for separate Designer and Developer positions. These two positions are often mentioned together during course creation; however, the role of a Developer has moved significantly into a distinct set of technical skills, especially due to the increasing use of educational technology (e.g., internet, complex software). If forced to choose only one of these two positions, a Designer or a Developer, then the Developer would be of higher value. Without materials being professionally produced, it is difficult to create quality training. Hopefully, while learning development skills, a Developer has acquired some design skills to apply, in place of a separate professional Designer.

Although oversight by a professional Manager is important, hiring a Manager among the first three members of a core training team would be too soon. So, if only Designers and Developers were chosen to form a small training team, they would need some natural or trained administrative and management skills.

## 7 SKILL 4: MANAGEMENT

Up to this point in staffing, there has been an assumption that the basic training team (Subject Matter Expert, Developer, Designer) have an acceptable level of self-management to conduct a training program without immediate oversight. However, the traits inherent to a formal Manager position are too critical to be assumed. Without leadership, authority, credibility, and coordination applied by a Manager, even the best Experts, most creative Designers, and most productive Developers, will likely struggle to coordinate with the larger organization. Working with a Manager from a larger department can ensure that the efforts of a small self-directed training team are in accord with larger organizational priorities and objectives. A good Manager will leave the technical content, the design, and the development work, to those members who have a proven ability to make good decisions. A Manager's primary roles include setting priorities, monitoring progress, coordinating with other managers, acquiring resources, and managing personnel.

It is debatable whether a Manager needs to have training experience or subject matter expertise herself. Like the Designer who does not need to be familiar with technical subjects, a Manager can be an effective coordinator without prior

training experience. However, in both cases, a Designer and a Manager, experience is preferred since it tends to foster a shared understanding that will benefit the entire program.

### **7.1 Administrative Support Skills**

The following skills (number 5-7) should be represented by two or more individuals, but can be combined, especially for smaller organizations. Together these skills form the ways and means to conduct a training program. An organization which does not have these specialists, typically struggles to assess audience needs, deliver efficient events, and respond to client requests. If specialized staff are not assigned to these duties, individuals must do these tasks incidental to their primary responsibilities. Including the following skills on staff should not be overlooked or minimized in favor of overstaffing with Experts or Managers.

## **8 SKILL 5: COMMUNICATION / MARKETING**

Demands from a large client audience can overwhelm an organization. Maintaining clear and frequent communication with clients is important. Sending out a catalog of course descriptions and a schedule of course delivery dates and locations can prevent many questions from coming in. A staff position similar to Public Information Officer or Customer Service Manager can create, collect, compile, and publish information, as well as maintain professional associations and social networks.

## **9 SKILL 6: COURSE DELIVERY SUPPORT**

The practicalities of course delivery require a staff person who gives attention to detail, and has knowledge of material formats and delivery technologies, to ensure that preparations are complete. Logistical support provided by a Coordinator includes, student registration (listing and confirming attendees), securing a location (facility reservations and equipment, coordinating with host organizations), reproduction of materials (copying and distributing), hardware and software set up (updating and purchasing equipment), travel arrangements, expenses, and loading information to computer networks. In addition, a Coordinator may need to maintain relations with a cadre of available instructors and a network of remote facility managers and hosts. For example, attorneys who need to accumulate continuing education documentation would appreciate a Coordinator who can obtain training material certifications from legal associations.

## **10 SKILL 7: ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION**

Training programs should conduct an analysis of needs within the target audience to ensure that appropriate goals are set for training, prior to beginning course development. A post-delivery evaluation of a course can provide valuable input

from students, instructors, experts, and managers. A staff Analyst should be able to collect measurable feedback, and then summarize both facts and impressions from the data. Expenses (development and delivery costs, return on investment), facility usage, student count, and many other data can be analyzed. Even a small training organization will need some measures of productivity and success. Ultimately, analysis should justify the resources that are being expended.

## **11 TO BEGIN OR EXPAND**

What to “do next” for staffing depends upon which skills are currently within the organization. Periodic restructuring of units and responsibilities is a normal part of growth and refinement. An organization which currently has few or no employees has an ideal opportunity to build staff intentionally, though they may face a difficult start. A group which already has plenty of people may struggle with a random mix of skills and historical constraints. Careful consideration is needed when choosing to either increase skills in current positions (thus doing more of the same work, and doing it better), or redirecting staff to new skills (thus offering new services to clients). The best hiring or skills development sequence can only be determined by the particulars of a specific situation. Contrary to the order of priorities above, a Coordinator who facilitates an increase in the number of training events per year could be hired before a Manager to represent the training program. Likewise, an Analyst who can justify resource needs for budgeting may be of greater value than a broad-reaching communication network.

Current staff might resist learning new skills. Retaining employees (through recognition and rewards) who already have desired skills is most critical during restructuring. Despite the wide range of skills suggested above, one Expert might be able to expand his responsibilities to encompass design, development, and delivery of materials. Such a person working with one Manager who expands her responsibilities and skills to include planning, coordination, advertising, and analysis, can together form a limited but complete training program. The main idea here is that all aspects of a complete training program should be considered, and covered to the extent possible, no matter the organization size and resources available.

## **12 SUPPORT AND PARTNERSHIPS**

Although the above staff listing uses a building block method, an organization could bypass the inclusion of any skill position - as long as a substitute is obtained from outside the organization. Few organizations can establish all necessary functions within their own staff. Contracting with other private or commercial organizations may be a highly attractive option, especially when highly specialized or limited-use skills or services are needed. Because expertise and primary decision-making authority is retained by government agencies, there may be no commercial sources of support available for many environmental and enforcement issues. Partnering with governmental agencies or public institutions

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is also an option when staff and equipment can be shared. Identifying the portion of target audiences shared by training providers allows collaboration when goals or subjects are similar.

### **13 CONCLUSION**

Purposeful planning and personnel management may have the greatest influence upon the success of a training program. Even a good plan for staff restructuring can be stalled by external influences, such as political and philosophical decisions beyond the control of the training program. Incorporation of appropriate personnel and related skills can overcome many limitations. Balancing the goals of an organization with its capabilities requires flexibility. A program may choose to divest from prior obligations, rather than automatically replacing a staff position with someone of like skills. With each change of mission, or departure of staff, a new opportunity arises to redefine a training program.

### **14 AUTHOR NOTES**

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The content of this paper represents the personal views of Mr. Couturier, and not necessarily views shared by the United States government.

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