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Is Your Training Department Out of Control?

by Catherine M. Sleezer & Richard A. Swanson

Are any of your training projects stalled? Do some of your current projects lack management's blessing? Have you recently completed a training program that did not meet management's expectations for quality, cost, or timeliness? Problems of this sort often signal that a training department is out of control—and in trouble. Such problems can eventually result in lower training budgets and the need to reduce training staff.

Most training departments use a systematic training approach to control the production of their programs. Training managers assume that when the production process is broken into logical and orderly steps, the result will be a high-quality program. They trust the systematic training process and expect that all their programs will meet organizational standards for efficiency and effectiveness.

Unfortunately, the training manager who relies primarily on the use of systematic training processes can be deceived. The fact that a system is logical doesn't mean that it is under control. Just as manufacturers who are interested in quality have dis-

covered that they need methods for controlling their processes, so training managers need a simple-to-use method for controlling the process they use in producing training programs. Process management concepts and methods can be used to plan the training department strategy and policies. They can also be used to monitor the programs while they are being developed. Through process management, the training manager can ensure that training resources are used efficiently and that each program is constructed to meet predetermined standards of timeliness and quality.

Process Management

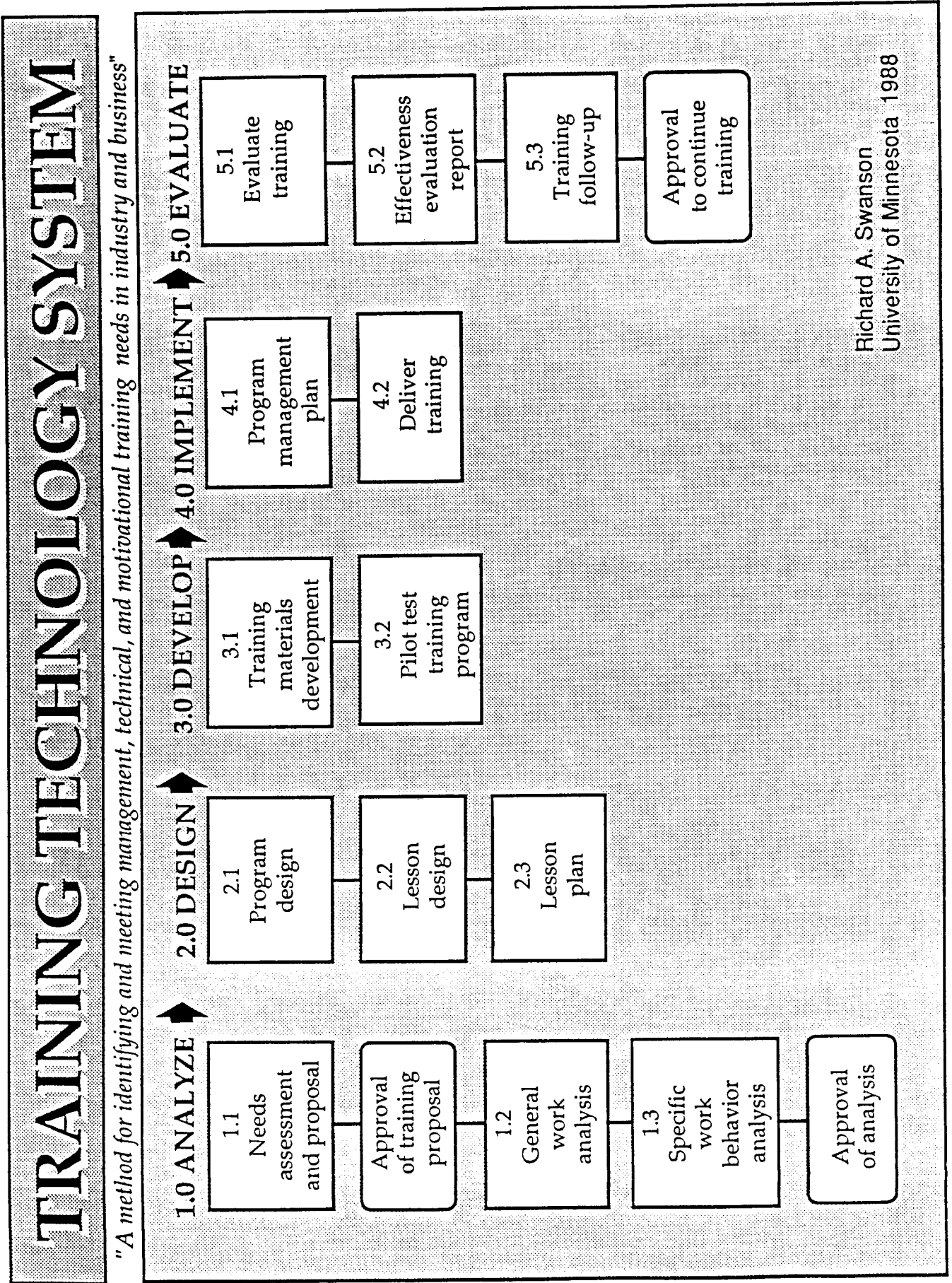
The Process Management Plan and the Process Management Record are two tools that can be used to manage any systematic approach to program development. In this article, we will use the Training Technology System (TTS) to illustrate how process management tools can be applied. The five major phases of the TTS are Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate (Swanson, 1987; Swanson & Sisson, 1985). The phases and the steps of the TTS are illustrated in Figure 1.

The Process Management Plan identifies the phases and steps of the training system, the tasks that must be completed in each step of the process, and the people

who are responsible for each task. The Plan serves to guide the process of development for each program from conceptualization to completion. Further, the completed Plan becomes the basis for the training policy on how work is done and who does it. Figure 2 shows a completed Process Management Plan. All the steps of the TTS are listed on the vertical axis, and the individuals who are involved in developing the program are identified by their roles on the horizontal axis. At each step, "x," "/", and "o" symbols show exactly how individuals are involved in the process. The "x" indicates who does the development work, the "/" indicates who determines whether the products resulting from a step meet quality standards, and the "o" indicates who receives information about each step.

The Process Management Record illustrates the training department's work-in-progress. The information recorded on the worksheet includes the names of the programs, the people responsible for team leadership, and an overview of each program—the phases of the training system that have been completed, and the projected and actual completion dates for each process step. This tool is used to monitor training projects during production and to plan the work flow of the depart-

Figure 1.
Training Technology System



ment. For example, the training manager can use the Record to review the projected completion dates for each step of each program, to plan for allocation of resources, and to see if each program is on target. Figure 3 shows the Process Management Record of a training department in a manufacturing company. In this example, six programs are "in-the-works." None have been completed.

Policy Options

When they use these process management tools, training managers make their expectations about work performance explicit. Before these decisions are implemented, they should be approved by upper management. Sub-

sequent approval and implementation of the plan establishes the company's policies on how the systematic training process is managed.

Only when training policies are firmly established is the training manager in the position to direct the effective and efficient development of training programs. If the training manager does not provide managerial direction, someone in the organization will. Without explicit process control decisions, a number of people, including subject experts, trainers, and managers of other departments, will shape the training department's policy for the purpose of serving their own best interests. Unfortunately, such people are seldom in the best position to determine how

training programs can be most successfully developed to further the strategic goals of the company.

The completed Process Management Plan reflects the training managers' decisions about work methods designed to meet the company's standards. When making decisions about the systematic training process, training managers should consider their own strengths in relation to the tasks to be performed. For example, they should determine the amount of control to exercise over projects and their own managerial role at each phase and step of the process. At one extreme are those managers who want everyone to report on each small detail of progress and at the other extreme are the managers who give away all control of train-

Figure 2.
Process Management Plan for the TTS

CORPORATION: <u>Prusco Inc.</u>											
DEPARTMENT: <u>Corporate Training</u>											
TRAINING MANAGER: <u>C. Prine</u>											
DATE: <u>4/88</u>											
		Upper Management	Department Manager or Supervisor	Subject Expert	Training Manager	Training Team Leader	Training Team Leader	Instructor	Other	Other	Other
ANALYZE	1.1 Needs assessment and proposal	/	X		X	O					
	1.2 General work analysis			O	O	X	/				
	1.3 Specific work behavior analysis			/	O	X	/				
DESIGN	2.1 Program design		O		O	X	/				
	2.2 Lesson design				O	X	O				
	2.3 Lesson plan				O	X	O				
DEVELOP	3.1 Training materials development			X	O	X	/				
	3.2 Pilot test training program		/	O	O	X	/	X			
IMPLEMENT	4.1 Program management plan			/	X	O					
	4.2 Deliver training				O	X	/	X			
EVALUATE	5.1 Evaluate training	O	O	/	X	/	O				
	5.2 Effectiveness Evaluation Report		/	O	O	X	/				
	5.3 Training follow-up		X	/	X						

Project Tasks:
 X = developer of product at this step
 / = determines if product for this step meets the quality standards
 O = receives communication about this step

ing projects to the individuals who are working on projects. In most instances a compromise between these extreme positions is the most useful response.

Managers should also consider the number of people who will be involved in producing training projects. On one extreme are managers who want to be sure that each step is done exactly right, so they do all the work themselves. At the other extreme are managers who want everyone to own the project, so they include everyone in each step of the project. Again, the key to success is compromise.

When filling-in the Process Management Plan, care should be taken to assure that appropriate

people are involved at each step of the process. Training involves coordinating the inputs from a number of people. Expertise comes from inside and outside the training department. That expertise includes knowledge of the organization, expert knowledge of the subject matter, and knowledge of systematic training processes. We have identified seven categories of experts that should be considered when the training manager develops a Process Management Plan. They include:

- Upper management
- Department Manager or Supervisor (Non-Training)
- Subject Expert
- Training Manager
- Training Team Leader

- Training Team Reviewer
- Instructor

The key to establishing sound policy is to determine the most effective use of each category of human resource.

Process Decisions

The role that each available expert takes at each step of the process will affect the efficiency and effectiveness of the training department. For example, involving upper management every step of the way would be a waste of resources and would surely bog down the projects. But involving them at the needs assessment step may well be critical. During needs assessment, management becomes committed

Figure 3.
Process Management Record for TTS

Department: Sales Training
Year: 1988

TRAINING PROJECT	Training Team Leader	Training Team Reviewer	Team Members							TTS Phases							TTS Steps				
			1.0 Analyze	2.0 Design	3.0 Develop	4.0 Implement	5.0 Evaluate	1.1 Needs Assessment	1.2 General Assessment Proposal	1.3 Specific Work Analysis	2.1 Program Behavior	2.2 Lesson Design	2.3 Lesson Plan	3.1 Materials Development	3.2 Pilot Test Training Program	4.1 Program Management Plan	4.2 Deliver Training	5.1 Evaluate Training	5.2 Effectiveness Training	5.3 Training Follow-up	
Basic Sales Training	Colt	Jones	X	X	X	X			1/4	1/25	2/29	2/5	2/5	2/12	3/3	3/10	3/11	3/30	3/29	5/2	5/5
Advanced Sales Training	Alt.	Jones	X	X					3/4	3/24	3/26	3/21	3/1	3/15	3/24	3/31	3/1	3/21	3/29	5/19	5/6
Product Knowledge	Teed	Ellis	X						5/2	5/21	5/31	5/2	5/2	5/6	5/8	5/15	5/16	5/22	5/19	5/21	5/21
Negotiation Skills	Meads	Jones	X	X					7/2	7/1	7/15	7/20	7/20	7/21	7/20	7/5	7/7	7/12	7/12	7/10	7/15
Supervisory	Meads	Colt	X	X					6/8	6/15	6/20	6/22	6/17	6/29	7/14	7/20	7/2	7/10	7/21	7/21	7/29
									5/12	5/22	5/28	5/30	5/5	5/8							

Proposed completion date =

Actual completion date =

to solving a problem and allocates resources to address it. Including upper management at this step assures that they approve the project and will hold both training and non-training managers accountable for completing the project. Logically then, upper management should also receive evaluation reports on program effectiveness.

The primary partnership should be between the managers in the organization who are experiencing a training need and the training manager. For this reason, the needs assessment is best viewed as a joint effort between these two individuals rather than something the training manager does and then presents back to that manager. Our view is that the decision to have these two managers responsible for doing the needs assessment and to have upper management approve the proposal, which includes both training and non-training elements, will change the entire position and strategy of the training function.

As we work our way down the list of key personnel, and match them with key tasks, the overall theme is that we think people should be doing what they do best, doing what is most consistent with their assigned roles. Further, we think their authority to do the job should be confirmed (or established) through the Process Management Plan. For example, subject experts can be confirmed for their ability to judge the content of training by establishing the policy that they must sign off on the content analysis. Concurrently, it could be decided that the department manager receives a copy but is not asked to approve it from the perspective of its meeting quality standards. Training specialists, serving in either the project leader or reviewer roles, should be allowed to complete the design, development, and implementation process without

undue interference from the training manager or others in the organization. As training experts they should be qualified to do their work and be able to check on each other. Having a team of trainers on each training project can appropriately shift these development and quality responsibilities away from the training manager.

Decisions about how classroom instructors should be involved in the several phases are also important considerations. This is particularly true if there are a variety of instructors who are non-training personnel.

The "other" personnel categories are used for consultants and office staff who are assigned responsibilities.

Summary

Training managers need to control the process by which their training programs are produced. To this end, we have provided easy-to-use tools for implementing training process control. We have also introduced the idea that the process management plan becomes in effect the training policy of the organization because it specifies what is done, who does it, how well, and who determines if the work meets standards. A plan that does all this is important and therefore should be carefully constructed.

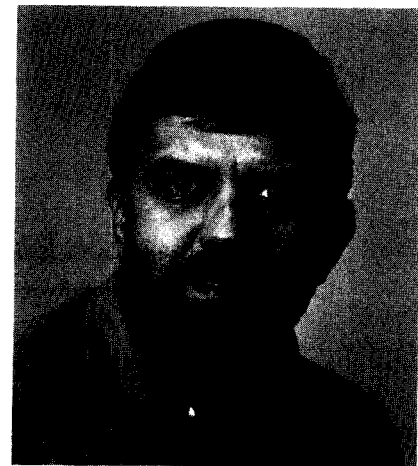


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