

Training Directors Roundtable #2 – Great Northern Hotel.

Moderated by: Angie Lang, Montana Legislative Audit Division.
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The Pros And Cons Of Current Tracking Systems For Training.

New York: A-train is a \$10,000 web version of training tracking software. It also comes with a \$6,000 maintenance fee. There are a lot of products out there similar to this and that agencies need to find a product that meets their needs. They should be aware that they need to avoid customization of off-the-shelf products because costs can get significantly higher once you try to customize these products.

In terms of A-Train vendor support could be better. The length of time it is taking to provide some maintenance support is affecting the productivity of the system.

Its capabilities provide staff with remote access to training histories, hours, class information, class resources, and they can also request classes using the system. You can automate the sending of the e-mails, reminders and updates. Since it is a database system it has the capability to generate a number of reports.

New York: Still using our customized in-house version of Lotus Notes. There are problems with its functionality and programming. We forced ourselves to use it. It was not a good choice to go with Lotus Notes.

Illinois: Using an Access database that was developed in-house. It runs reports both on individuals and groups. It can also produce training certificates. It can track training costs because there is a field for it included. Since it is an Access database, we can use Excel in conjunction with it. It also has the functionality of drop-down menus for staff names.

Georgia: Use an Access database. Their information technology department developed a web-based system. The capabilities for tracking training costs may be there. Scheduling is an unknown. Since this is a database it has the capability to run several types of reports.

North Carolina: Use Excel spreadsheets. It is an all older system, and each division enters in its own information.

South Dakota: Use an Access database. They have a smaller staff, so it is easy to key in the information. The use of drop-down boxes also makes it very easy to use and reports are available since it is a database.

Maryland: Use Access. We can generate reports to track CPE and also a CPE requirements.

California: California is using a system called Primavera, which this note taker likes because it sounded like Italian food.

Maryland: Using WebHR., which is tied into their entire human resource system. Provides different levels of access to the system based upon your job position. You can access and change information, depending upon your level of access to the system. There is a training module within the H. R. system. It will read Excel and Access files and produce reports for tracking hours and accreditation. They are using Cabinet NG to scan documents. However it is expensive. It had an initial cost of \$120,000 with a \$45,000 annual maintenance fee. It does not have online learning capabilities, but staff can get to those through an office intranet.

Louisiana: A customized Access database that was developed by a consultant for about \$18,000. It allows staff to query their own records. It also has reports available.

Curriculum For More Experienced Staff

For more experienced staff it may be necessary to send them to conferences. That way they can interact with their peers. However, the agency has to make a commitment to its managers to do this and has to match the staff to the proper conference.

It was mentioned that there are a number of soft skills courses that are available that more experienced staff can be sent to.

In one state there were no curriculums. People just get what they need, and everyone goes to it. Generally, it is the same topic, but a different delivery for each level of staff. An example of that would be ACL training. It was also noted that each division does its own training.

For "forced changes" that come upon the offices training must be given to everyone such courses on the risk-based suite or SASs or updates to the yellow book.

Interpersonal communication skills for managers and ACL classes for managers were options that were presented.

And there was discussion on the level of staff, who should provide the training and the needs to train everyone versus training just specialists and having them provide the information to the rest of the office.

Courses On Managing People

It was noted that a lot of the offices need courses on soft topics. They have sent people to management training, but what seemed to be missing was the feedback on what they can do with it after they get the training. It was noted that leadership training has to be ongoing and needs to be reinforced. This needs to take place in a series of steps. The idea was that all the concepts seem to be the same, but people need to implement those concepts at some point in time. Some offices have tried to use a sequential number of classes over a period of time to help reinforce the training.

One problem that exists is that people get caught up in their regular job duties and the training is not reinforced. Is it that we are ignoring the staff or do priorities need to change? A one size fits all approach does not work here either. We need to be able to flex our leadership style therefore, there needs to be training in all kinds of styles, but you have to learn one that fits you and be able to use it on the job.

Alternative approaches were discussed. One was to have managers read books and report back through essays on what was included in the chapters and during leadership sessions discuss these books. Awards were given for the best essay on implementing it in the workforce. There was also discussion of the use of a book club and what book was useful in relation to leadership style.

A leadership curriculum was developed using a strategic leadership Institute. It includes academic classes over a nine-month period. Individuals who go to these classes are picked by management as being potential leaders.

There is also a 52 hour course that covered soft skills, but they're trying to pare it down.

There was a general consensus that if we find something that works - people need to share it with others quickly. We need to be proactive. There was discussion as to using a bulletin board or centralizing the information on the NASACT web. The point was that we have to keep the ideas current and also keep it simple. List-serves were an option that was discussed.

Yellow Book Questions

There was a question as to the training hours necessary if you're a part-time employee. The dilemma is the level of compliance (in terms of hours) with the Yellow Book requirements. Marcia agreed to talk to the powers to be and get a definitive answer.

Web-based training and audio conferences are good ways of getting Yellow Book training. There was discussion as to the number of hours you can claim for doing on-line training. The CPE credit is the number of hours listed – not how long it takes.

There was also discussion as to how many CPE credits you get for developing courses versus instructing courses or taking courses.

The discussion ended with a brief explanation of self security training and awareness training in terms of everyone thinking about at least getting some sort of training in security awareness or self-defense.

End of Roundtable #2