



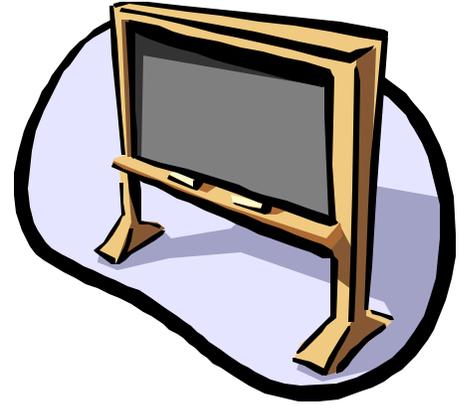
PROGRAMMED TRAINING

BY STEVEN R. KELLER, CPP

In many organizations, it is not practical to provide in-class training every time training is required. Many security organizations offer "on-job training," but too often this is abused. When you ask many security managers if they train their guards, they reply that they do. But further questioning reveals that "on-job training" is the method they use. This method is over used. Too often, guards are assigned to a senior guard, who is usually not adequately trained and rarely as a trainer, and the new guard is miraculously believed to be trained. In fact, all he/she learns are the bad habits of the old-timers.

It is with concern that "Programmed Training" also will be overused, that I introduce you to this innovative technique. "Programmed Training" refers to a method by which employees are permitted to study on their own, or loosely under the direction of a senior officer, but at their own pace and on carefully prepared modules of training. I fear that those who abuse "OJT" will jump on the "Programmed Training" bandwagon and will abuse it as well by simply reverting to self training--which is no training at all.

The problem with overuse of OJT and the abuse of "Programmed Training" is that it is likely to be perceived by a court of law as an



ineffective or inadequate method of training. It will be clear to a jury, when OJT and "Programmed Training" are adopted, to simply be the "easy way out" of the responsibility to provide "real" training.

With this warning in mind, let's look at "Programmed Training." One major fast food chain uses this system. First, let's look at how they operate. They hire unskilled and untrained people-- usually high school graduates or dropouts, at slightly over minimum wage. Turnover is very high. They would need several training specialists at each store just to handle new training as a result. But not every employee is ready or able to handle every task the day he is hired--or ever, for that matter. Not everyone can be trusted to handle cash or tend the fryer or deal with the public. There is a quantum difference between the training needed to know how to mop the floor and the training needed to "close," the procedure where a senior employee "Z's" out the cash register, accounts for the shift's receipts, and processes the cash.

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This chain hires just enough people to run the store on two shifts Monday through Friday. They actually hire more, but attrition results in so many vacancies that their actual staffing is always "short," equal to two full days on two shifts. To keep the store open, they offer overtime opportunities to anyone willing to work. After all, at minimum wage, overtime is necessary and desirable and it won't really break the store's budget.

When a new employee is hired, he/she is trained on basic employee procedures--uniforms, cleanliness, customer courtesy, tardiness, etc. He/she is also trained on how to mop the floor. Period. From that day on, this employee will have a bright career mopping the floors as long as he/she wants it, and as long as he/she is willing to earn the wage at which hired. Since he/she has no skills beyond mopping the floor, he/she can only work overtime when a vacancy exists at a floor mopping level.

If another employee has learned to take stock from the stock room, unwrap it, and place it on shelves in the kitchen, that employee is at a higher pay and performance level than the floor mopper. When overtime opportunities arise, the person with the highest level of skill is given first crack at it--sort of seniority, but based on training. This is not to say that a stock person will not be asked to mop floors. But a floor mopper will NEVER be asked to do anything but mop, except when under the direction of a senior person for training purposes.

Every "task group" is identified into categories and a training module is prepared on it. There is a reading section and a workbook section with a test. When the store is slow and the floor is cleaned, the manager asks the employee who is removing stock from the stockroom and placing it on shelves to show the floor mopper how to do the job. At his/her own pace and when he/she is ready, the floor mopper is allowed to take the workbook module home with him/her, study the material and take the test on stockroom work. When he/she passes the test, the employee is advanced to that level, given a nickel per hour raise, and is allowed to work overtime in the floor mopping AND stockroom tasks.

For each module successfully completed (after a period of OJT with an experienced person) an employee is given a pay raise. The manager monitors performance and returns employees to training who do not perform properly. It is not possible to advance up the ladder if a module is not mastered.

For more complex tasks, like "closing," an employee may work several nights with a senior employee. After taking the self-training module, he/she is given a chance to work alone with the manager's observation. When he/she can pass the test and "close"--or perform the appropriate task --alone, the employee is "certified" for that level.

The applications and advantages for security training are obvious. It is important that a basic training program



be provided that gives the guard the basic skills needed to perform the job properly. He/she must, for example, be trained on use of force BEFORE hitting the floor running or hitting a customer in the nose. If the guard is not trained and an incident occurs, you can be criticized or sued. But specialized tasks can be taught in programmed modules after basic training and at the speed of the employee, and compensation can be adjusted upward accordingly.

"Programmed Training" gives employees a chance to proceed at their own level. It provides documentation for the employee's performance, and the employee essentially writes his/her own pay raise, removing you from criticism. Employees who are not brain surgeon material are a dime a dozen. But occasionally, we find a gem in the rough and want to hang on to that gem until he/she is properly polished and capable of moving into a supervisory or managerial role. "Programmed Training" gives each employee a chance to proceed to the top.

Another advantage of this method is that one training supervisor can oversee the progress and training of many people. But it is not a method that eliminates the need for a training specialist. And the development of a good program requires a lot of time and thought. It must be written at the most basic level if your job pool is not fully literate, can't read English well, etc.

More companies should engage the services of specialists in adult training and have them prepare "Programmed Training" programs. While it is not the answer to all training problems, it is a good solution to many of them.