

# Can We Control Training Waste?

**Training is a means to an end, not an end unto itself. Training supports the "ultimate" activity, which is *cost-effective, timely and accurate on-the-job performance*. Individuals in the training pipeline (instructors, students, or support staff), are not performing operational tasks. For instance, in a military context, individuals in the training pipeline are not flying missions, they are not at sea on a drug interdiction operation, nor are they keeping the peace in Afghanistan or performing a headquarters function.**

Each individual (staff member or student) assigned to a training function is taken away from the total resources available to perform the organization's assigned mission. Based on this reality, organizations should properly view training as an overhead cost. Requests for training should be treated the same way as any other request for non-core funding. They should be scrutinized, validated and, if deemed valid, become the subject of research and analysis to ascertain the most cost-effective means of acquiring the training.

## The Current Environment

Historically, government agencies developed and institutionalized large, inefficient training organizations. These organizations are typically forced into mediocrity by a structure that provides them only with sufficient funds to sustain their current operations, and they are not mandated, resourced, or funded to reduce training time and expense, and/or to improve the quality of their product.

It is not unusual for dedicated military training organizations to consume 5–10% of the parent organization's allocated manpower. In peacetime, it is easy to overlook the fact that a significant percentage of available personnel are in training positions. However, as in many allied countries, the requirements for sustained world-wide operations has drained the operational forces and caused a more

intense scrutiny of the large numbers of personnel assigned to training.

Within the last five years, an increasing number of military organizations have begun to overhaul their training organizations with the intention of reducing training time and costs, improving student proficiency and sustaining proficiency levels throughout an individual's career. Most analyses conclude that 30–50% reductions in training time should be easily achievable; and data from transitional projects have validated these expectations.

## Training Revolution

In 2001, the United States Navy commissioned a high-ranking team to analyze their training structure and to provide recommendations to the Chief of Naval Operations on ways to improve training effectiveness and to reduce training waste. Known as "Task Force Excel," they coined the term "Revolution in Training" to convey their conviction that a *revolutionary*, versus *evolutionary*, change in training and support was needed. As a result of a detailed study and the conclusions reached by Task Force Excel, the U.S. Navy (USN) formally announced in 2002 their intention to conduct a "Revolution in Training." Of a force strength of 800,000, they had an average of 48,000 people in training, and the Chief of Naval Operations wanted a more efficient training pipeline to reduce the overhead cost associated with the

existing environment. Since that time, the USN has consolidated training under a single command, made the Commander, Naval Education and Training Command, report directly to the Chief of Naval Operations, and published goals and plans for significant reductions in "training waste." Some of the initiatives being pursued include:

- Make learning and educational material freely available over the web. This initiative allows self-starters the opportunity to progress in advance of their peers.
- Link Synthetic Equipment Trainers, e-learning courseware modules, and adaptive learning software to allow individuals to demonstrate their proficiency on-line, and then either get credit for their demonstrated proficiency or be presented with an automatically tailored course that only addresses these deficiencies. With this environment, individuals can get credit for their knowledge and cognitive ability without attending a formal classroom.
- Integrate Synthetic Trainers with Electronic Performance Support Systems to allow training to be conducted anywhere, anytime, and to provide a more effective on-job performance support environment.
- Migrate individual and subteam operator training to a reconfigurable PC environment.
- Convert from using actual equipment for technical training to the use of a blend of Computer Based Training, Synthetic Equipment Trainers and Part Task Trainers (if and when required).
- Install the infrastructure and implement policies to allow individuals to access training as needed, rather than when it is convenient for the training organization.
- Make training available at the main operating bases to make training more accessible, to reduce travel and living costs, and to facilitate continuous refresher training.

## Return On Investment (ROI)

Each organization, at whatever level, will have unique factors and variables that influence their specific ROI calculations. It is likely, however, that they will see similar benefits to those calculated by the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence (Royal Navy). The Royal Navy assigned a high-level study team in 2003 to analyze

their maintainer training pipeline and concluded that significant gains could be achieved if they migrated from the use of actual equipment to the adoption of Synthetic Equipment Trainers. It was also determined that significant cost-savings would result from an evolution from a centralized school training environment to a system that allowed training to be conducted at each of the Navy's operational bases and aboard deployed warships. Other conclusions included:

- Potential to reduce training time by 30–50% to meet performance standards.
- Potential to recover 8–12% of available technical manpower for reassignment to operational jobs.
- Potential significant reductions in:
  - Cost of training;
  - Size of training establishments (housing, messing, support staff, instructor staff, classrooms, etc);
  - Associated travel and living costs.
- Potential improvement in system operational availability, and collateral decrease in maintenance induced fail-

ures and the requirement for “third-party” technical assistance.

- Potential to eliminate cognitive skill fade in technical staff.

As a result of their ROI calculations, the Royal Navy has authorized the establishment of Waterfront Training and Education Centres (WTECs) at each of the Fleet Concentration areas, and will award a series of contracts in 2005 to convert existing courses to a format that is deployable to each WTEC.

### Success Factors

Government departments that have realized the quickest Return on Investment have had similar approaches to revising their training organizations. Common approaches include:

- Assigning a senior officer to implement necessary changes under senior-level departmental mandate.
- Issuing formal departmental policy statements to encourage and support changes.
- Providing adequate funds for the transition.

### Conclusion

Government departments, military and security forces of countries that have scrutinized their legacy training systems have all identified the potential for very significant cost savings and the potential to convert “staff in training” to “staff in operational positions.” Military planners are finding that the time invested in a review of the training overhead account is yielding very lucrative returns in terms of cost savings and operationally available personnel. **FL**

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