

CROSS TRAINING AND ITS IMPACT ON EMPLOYEES IN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Every industry will have a specific job description for each role or each employee. This is the traditional way of working in the industry. This method is changed after cross-training is introduced where employees are trained for various skills and for job functions that lie within their work domain. The effect of cross-training on Work performance and benefits to the employee are studied in this paper. The aim of this work is to study the perception of cross-training, work performance, and benefits to the employees working in the manufacturing industry.

Keywords: Cross Training, Work Life, Perception, Employees.

INTRODUCTION

These days the cross-training is used as a tool that helps to improve the productivity of the employees and also helps employers to retain skilled employees. It is no more considered as a temporary solution.

Cross-training is defined as the training given to an employee to learn a different task that is being performed by another employee in the same department. This type of training might be mutual in many cases. Worker A learns the skills of worker B and B learns what is being performed by worker A. This is self-explanatory that this training method is called cross-training. This is not only suitable for workers and low-level employees but also useful for the managers to manage the workforce by learning and understanding the tasks being performed by the employees. If the manager knows the depth and time taken to perform each task, he can manage the team well and achieve efficiency Stanca (2008).

There is no limitation of the position in the industry to be cross-trained. The current world is becoming a global village and the competition is becoming high in every field. It is mandatory to improve the efficiency of all the employees at the workplace to face the competition. Many industries are implementing different techniques to reduce costs, like outsourcing and downsizing, etc. Such things will affect the good relationship between the workers and employer. Employees will not get the feel of job security and may not be loyal to the employer. This affects the mutual gain. Employees will think in such a way that what they will gain by working in an organization while the employer will think to extract the maximum output from the employees to achieve the profit from the business Bhatia (2020).

Work-life balance is also an important factor for the employees. When their personal needs are not met, they will plan to leave the organization which increases the attrition rate. Many of organizations can afford expensive solutions to bring down the attrition rate. A small organization cannot afford such solutions but plan to increase the confidence level in the employees and provides them with the job security. Cross-training they makes them to learn many skills that help to improve job security. This improves the social contract between the employee and employer

that benefits both the employee and employer Mosca et al. (2007).

The important aim of cross-training is to develop the skills of the employees. Again the development of the employee and implementation of cross-training depends on the nature of business and the goals of the organization. Hence the cross-training methods are customized for every organization but not generalized to all the industries Bhatia (2020).

The employees who undergo the cross-training will get an overall understating of the organization and they will be exposed to understand the full view of their organization goals. The analysis of the needs of the employee and employer can be done either by the employee or employer. The strengths and weaknesses of the employees are to be listed out before starting the cross-training. The capabilities of every employee are to be analyzed to know what and all an employee can perform to achieve the organizational goals Deepa & Thenmozhi (2018).

Benefits of Cross-Training

The benefits of cross-training can be classified as benefits to employees and the employer.

1. An employee can step into the tasks of another employee if he goes on unplanned leave or absent from work thus the continuity of the work will be there.
2. A new employee can be trained by any of the cross-trained employees, no need to provide a special trainer.
3. The busy work schedules can be shared by cross-trained employees.
4. Even if one or two employees go on leave, the production will run uninterruptedly.
5. The flexibility will be high throughout the company.
6. Cross-training will create a workforce of versatile working
7. The number of different tasks is reduced as each employee can perform multiple tasks thus reducing the work jurisdiction.
8. Stagnation of the work in the company is prevented.
9. The productivity in the organization will be enhanced.
10. The teamwork will be improved with good coordination among the employees
11. Family-friendly policies will be developed to balance work and personal life.
12. A learning organization will be developed.
13. The marketability of the organization will be improved.
14. The retention rate will be increased that helps to reduce the costs of new recruitment.
15. The employees will be motivated and committed. Opportunities for employee promotion will be increased. Employees will be able to understand the goals of the organization.
16. Employees will develop self-esteem.
17. The chances of getting rewarded and recognized will be more. Employees will be able to support their colleagues during needy times.
18. Marketability of the multi-skilled employees will be more both internally and externally compared to non cross-trained employees.
19. The flexibility of substituting the employees in the place of absentees saves the costs of deploying the temporarily recruited employees.
20. All the employees will understand the relation between the departments and will be able to understand and handle any work of any department.
21. The differences between the employees of different departments or divisions will be eliminated as all the employees know something of everything.
22. The hidden talents of the employees will be brought out.
23. The growth of the employees is guaranteed.
24. All these factors are the positive outcomes of implementing cross-training in an organization.

Objective of Study

1. To assess the perception of things that influence the cross-training of the staff.
2. To determine the Relationship between Cross-training and Benefits to employees Table 1.

Statements	Mean	SD
Cross-training helps the employees to perform the job efficiently	3.57	1.033
The job becomes much more interesting after being cross-trained	3.73	0.964
Creativity improved after attending cross-training	3.81	0.935
Employees feel encouraged to try better methods	3.86	0.915
Able to learn the latest trends and improve knowledge	3.61	1.141
Can get better recognition from management after attaining	3.08	1.211
Knowing only one skill makes the job highly routine and	3.66	0.946
The current job involves knowing a number of multiple tasks	3.73	1.098
Organization respects employees who provide new ideas and	3.74	0.927
Superior expresses his/her confidence in the ability to perform the job effectively	3.51	1.200

Table reveals the perception of the need for cross-training in the view of an employee. The mean value of the variables calculated in the need for cross-training in the view of the employee are: Cross-training helps the employees to perform the job efficiently is 3.57, Job becomes much more interesting after being cross-trained is 3.73, Creativity improved after attending cross-training is 3.81, Employees feel encouraged to try better methods is 3.86, Able to learn latest trends and improve knowledge is 3.61, Can get better recognition from management after attaining multiple skills is 3.08, Knowing only one skill makes the job highly routine and predictable is 3.66, Current job involves knowing a number of different tasks is 3.73, Organization respects employees who provide new ideas and knowledge is 3.74 and Superior expresses his/her 3.51. Employees feel encouraged to try better methods is the key aspect for the need for cross-training in the employee perceptive Raheja (2015).

The respondents agreed that their creativity can improve after attending cross-training, organization respects employees for providing new ideas and knowledge, their job becomes much more interesting after being cross-trained, their current job involves knowing a number of various tasks, they know only one skill makes the job highly routine and predictable, they are able to learn latest trends and improve knowledge and Cross-training helps the employees to perform their job more efficiently Slomp & Molleman (2002).

However, the respondents showed lesser agreement towards their superior expresses confidence in the job effectively and they can get better recognition from management after attaining multiple skills Table 2.

	Benefits to employees	
	r-value	p-value
Cross training	0.604**	<.001

**Significant at 1% level.

A significant correlation (r=0.604) is found between Cross-training and Benefits to

employee and it is observed positive Sekhar et al. (2017). Here in this situation this is observed that improvement through Cross-training enhances the benefits to the employee in the Manufacturing industry.

Cross-training is a preparatory tool to handle the absence of a skilled employee. The team which has undergone the cross-training will handle the risk during fluctuating workflows with their flexibility. It helps the lower-level employee to move up the career ladder with the help of multiple skills. In both ways, it is useful for the organization Banerjee & Shivaji (2016).

Durability

A company is said to be not sustainable if only one skilled person is available for one task. Cross-training helps in such situations to bring sustainability by assisting with multi-skilled employees.

Agility

Employees will gain professional development through cross-training in the organization. It is a favourable condition for both the employee and employer, as the employees will get opportunities to learn many things and the employer will gain by getting prepared to face any unexpected challenges.

Flexibility

Organizations with cross-trained employees can easily manage the disruptions and easily recover from such situations. They can handle the transitions smoothly as they are well versed in all sorts of skills that are needed for the production.

Teamwork

Employees will build a strong relationship with the co-employees in all the teams as they will visit all teams and interact with many teams during the process of cross-training. By building a good relationship with all the teams they will be able to share the knowledge. The teams will be able to understand the overall picture of the organization.

Efficiency

Cross-training makes the teams to revise their work, the way they perform the work will be refined while training others. They learn while teaching as they will face many questions from the trainee employees. This makes them become masters of their skills thus enhancing the overall efficiency of the individual and also the teams.

Many of the human resource managers and other team heads will have a wrong notation that the employee motivation can be achieved by providing them monetary benefits. They will realize that the rewards and monetary perks are not the key reasons to motivate the employees. The working environment, professional management, valuing employee services, and making them to develop their career are the key sources to motivate the employees Sultana et al. (2012).

The lack of motivation and morale in the employees will result in increased turnover in the organization. The employees performing the same tasks every day will make them static and demotivates them which results in a turnover. Cross-training them to do different tasks day in, day

out makes them enthusiastic and motivates them to show interest in the work which in turn avoid the turnover Colombo & Stanca (2008).

Successful Cross-Training Plan

To gain the benefits of a cross-training program, a step by step process is to be defined carefully and then implemented as per the plan. Every business may not get the defined benefits out of the cross-training. Small businesses may achieve success out of the cross-training compared to big businesses. The number of divisions, type of technology used also plays role in achieving success. The program will become successful if employees are also allowed to take part in the planning. A few steps that are mandatory for every organisation to implement a successful cross-training program are listed below.

1. The number and type of tasks in the company are to be listed out.
2. The jobs that can be performed successfully by others are to be identified.
3. Identify the team members who are willing to learn new things. Someone who is not interested cannot be forced to attend cross-training which may give negative results.
4. Find out the team members who have the competency to perform the identified tasks.
5. Identify the teams among which cross-training is to be conducted. The front office team can be trained for supervising the housekeeping and vice-versa. This depends upon the nature of the work they are doing. That means, the skills to be trained, learning capabilities, and learning needs are to be matched.
6. A training process and the trainer needs to be defined. The employee currently performing the task or his supervisor can train the team who are willing to learn.
7. The workload for the person under training is to be reduced to make him learn comfortably otherwise he will feel work pressure and may not perform well.
8. Sufficient time has to be given to learn and then practice the skills. The skills need to be trained frequently, the people who have learned may not remember forever.
9. The employees who have undergone cross-training and performing well are to be recognized and rewarded.
10. The cross-training should be made as a part of the employee career development program
11. Management should allocate sufficient funds and training facilities to conduct the cross-training.
12. Employees should be made to understand that their value in the organization will increase after undergoing cross-training.

CONCLUSION

Cross-training makes the employees learn multiple skills that make them support the co-employees during needy times. Especially in small businesses, the unpredictability can be managed by the cross-trained In small companies, all the employees will be trained as the number of employees is limited and each employee needs to do a number of tasks. In manufacturing companies, it is necessary to train employees to learn multi-skills. If anyone's task stops, that affects the entire production line as all the functions in a manufacturing environment are interdependent. The process of making the employees learn many skills bring collective success to the industry. When the employees share their work and knowledge, confidence will be developed and they take pride in sharing such work experiences. Thus, the support and cooperation among the employees will be improved.

Thus, the implementation of cross-training in the manufacturing industry with multiple or diverse functional units becomes beneficial to the employees both financially and for the development of the career.

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