



NCVO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT Good employment practice case study

Developing and implementing a staff training programme

We spoke to the Senior Learning and Development Manager of a national charity who told us about the implementation of a training initiative that was rolled out across the country around two years ago.

1. How did this come about? What brought this issue to light?

Around two years ago, a strategic change in the volunteer fundraising department meant that the current nationwide fundraising team required upskilling. The role-specific learning meant that the current team needed training in business skills and this would affect the way the entire fundraising team would be working.

2. What were the aims?

- To upskill all the volunteers nationwide
- To train the volunteers in the skills they needed to lead the service

3. Who was involved?

- Head of Training and Development
- Training Managers
- Training consultants

4. What did you do? How did you plan it?

- The first step was to conduct a [Training Needs Analysis](#)
 - This was conducted by the training managers
 - The current skills of the workforce were looked at
 - These skills were mapped against the aims
 - Requirements of the new role had to be drawn up
 - They identified where they were and where they wanted to be, and this helped draw out the skills gap

5. How was the training designed? What format did it take?

Consultants

The first step was to bring in some external consultants to design three training courses for the staff. Small groups of frontline staff members were brought together to talk to the consultants to help identify key parts of the training programme. This one day session was conducted in line with objectives which were set by the

organisations which included finding out what could be achieved with training and determining what staff members needed.

The consultants used these sessions to design the final training programme.

Pilot

The next stage in the process was to pilot the training. **Piloting is an important stage** as it helps to iron out the process as well as help check that the content was correct and meeting the needs of the volunteers.

- The training itself was led by internal staff members based upon what the consultants had designed.
- Feedback on the exercise was taken at the piloting stage to ensure the programme would deliver what it was intended to.

6. How was it delivered?

Marketing

The Learning and Development Manager explained that when rolling out a training programme, **it needs to be marketed well**. It is vital to think about the different audiences:

- the fundraisers needed to be told what they would gain from going on the training
- their managers needed to be convinced that the training was beneficial enough for their staff to let them attend.

You have to ensure that this is advertised sufficiently. Failing to market your training fully can result in people not attending the training. **The importance of employee buy-in is huge.**

Whilst this training was not mandatory for all staff members, even with mandatory training, there needs to be good marketing, as failure to do this can result in people not taking anything away from the training or not understanding why they are there and thus switching off.

Application

People always want something that they can take away and apply to their roles. **You need to ask what people are transferring back to the workplace** and this is something that is hard to get right.

You need to encourage managers to talk to their staff after attending training. Reflecting on the training can really help people to understand how to apply what they learnt to their roles. This is often done in one-to-one meetings, but not always. This can be problematic as some people need to have guided reflection to see how they can put what they've learned into practice.

7. What went well in the implementation?

After the nationwide training was rolled out, feedback was taken from the sessions and it showed that people did take things away and that it increased the confidence of those who attended.

The new way of working is underway and very effective

8. What barriers did you face?

- Location – training must be delivered in convenient locations and it shouldn't cost the volunteers too much to get to
- Keeping up communication – you need to sell the benefits of attending to people on a day-to-day basis
- Buy-in from the top – especially when organisational change is happening, you need the senior team to back what is going and be visible to the affected staff

Learning and development should be very strategic. **The Learning and Development Manager recommended going to leadership with your proposal and demonstrating the business impact your ideas and training will have.** Get them to send out some communication supporting the learning and development to increase buy-in from all levels.

9. What would you do differently?

Communication – **you need to keep up momentum.** You need to demonstrate organisational impact as much as possible and make sure it is led from the top. **Communication is key.**

The Learning and Development Manager explained that the evaluation of the training outcomes could also have been improved – **some key indicators were put together** which were used primarily for management purposes; future plans involve using surveys to assess the success of training plans.

10. Any future developments in the pipe line?

The Learning and Development Manager is currently changing how training and development is delivered.

- There is a shift from a training team doing the delivery - to line managers delivering
- Managers need training to achieve this
- This approach will create buy-in from managers as they'll be investing in their employees personally

The 2009/10 training needs plan is looking to see if the skills the staff have been trained in are correct for their roles.

Key tips:

- Training needs to be constantly reviewed.
- Training needs change all the time so you need to keep up.
- It takes time to make a plan, design an intervention and then deliver it.
- It's good to get managers involved in this process to help keep up to speed as they know their business best.

11. Final comments? Advice for others?

i) The theory behind training needs analysis (TNA) can be rigid. You have to make sure you look around where you get your information from. Listen to people and challenge everything. You may speak to people who think their needs are in one area, but when you drill down and challenge, you may find the needs lie somewhere else. You need to match training to what people actually need in their role.

ii) Make sure you test any assumptions you make. You may talk to ten people about their training needs and get ten different responses.

iii) Generic aims can be hard to take back to the work place – be specific in your aims and give people something to take back. Make sure these aims are highlighted from the start of the training

iv) Training and development can be shrouded in hard-to-understand language. You can promote Learning and Development as something that is not only beneficial, but also do-able once you break down the language barriers.