

## Talent Development 42 Identify Constraints

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



Section 3.4 in the CPTD Certification program for ATD is Talent Strategy & Management. Section D states, “Skill in identifying anticipated constraints or problems affecting talent development initiatives, for example resource deficiencies or lack of support.”

These two items are common problems with training initiatives, and I will discuss each of these in this article. Equally important are **unanticipated** constraints that can become stumbling blocks. I will give some examples of these.

### Resource Deficiencies

Every training effort must be staffed properly to be effective. The number of people to be trained needs to be clear as well as the cohort size and pattern of classes. In addition, the resources of available rooms and supplies, like projectors and chart paper, must match the anticipated load.

If the training is going to be virtual or partially virtual, all participants must have the proper hardware, software, and bandwidth to support the load. The participants must also be trained on how to use the equipment that is provided.

In addition to the resources just mentioned, administration resources need to be considered so that people can register for the course and attend the sessions. For simple programs, the administration load should be light, but for highly complex programs the administration load can be very significant.

The most important resources will be the facilitators of the training. These people need to be in sufficient quantity to get the job done, and they must be located where the work will be done. They also must have excellent facilitation skills.

### Lack of Support

One category of constraints is the lack of full support by the organization. Often the training program is approved at the top without knowing the details of how the program might disrupt business as usual. When push comes to shove, managers will cancel training classes in an effort to keep production rolling.

Sometimes managers give lip service to the required financial support. When the operation gets behind on targeted earnings, often leaders will pull the plug on talent development efforts. The training is frequently considered a discretionary program.

If one plant is behind on performance goals, the training may get delayed until that group can catch up on production.

### **Unanticipated Problems**

The things mentioned thus far in this article are typical constraints that come up frequently. The existence of surprise problems can be just as deadly, and they hit hard because there was no way to plan how to mitigate the disruption. There could be hundreds of different situations. I will mention just a few possibilities here, for the sake of brevity.

### **Unexpected Travel**

A person who is scheduled for vital training may find him or herself on the road with a client issue. Also, a person may choose to take vacation to handle a family emergency and have to miss class. Sometimes there is a way to have the absent person join a different cohort to make up the training, but that is not always possible.

### **Instructor Missing**

The scheduled instructor may have an unavoidable conflict for any number of reasons. In this case, the training is usually postponed, but sometimes it just gets cancelled. If the operation is well staffed, then there may be a way to flex other instructors to bridge the void. Usually such a luxury is not available.

### **Major Weather-Related Incident**

There could be a flood or snow related emergency that makes it impossible for people to attend the training. There may or may not be a provision to make up the lost training time. There could be an electrical outage due to a heavy storm. A hurricane or tornado would likely disrupt the training as well as operations in general.

As we learned in 2020, there may be some kind of pandemic or other health issue that creates the need to flex to a different model for training. The best advice is to anticipate that there will be some problems and have various ways to flex in order to accomplish the training.

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