

THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING

The Military Approach

J.R. SHERRIFF  
Training Officer  
Caxton

WHAT IS TRAINING?

- A process for
- (1) Developing the knowledge and skills needed to perform effectively on the job.
  - (2) Maintaining a high standard of performance.
  - (3) Developing favourable attitudes to the work.

PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

To examine the military training system and how it develops effective performance, so that managers of logging operations can consider using similar training techniques for performance development.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF TRAINING?

The military is unable to recruit individuals who are already competent in military tasks. So they use training to achieve that competence. Not only is the individual trained in a trade or job, but teamwork is also developed. The operational effectiveness of these teams is the ultimate goal of the military training system. For example, the SAS are renowned for their self confidence, skill, teamwork, and above all for their effectiveness. Such results are achieved by careful selection of personnel followed by extensive specialist training which produces a "super" soldier and a highly effective operational unit. It is obvious that this extent of training is out of the question for logging contractors. The point is that the extent of effective performance is related to the extent of the personnel selection and the training systems. If you pay little or no attention to these aspects then your standards of performance will probably reflect your lack of concern. This is certainly the case in the military.

HOW IS THIS EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE DEVELOPED?

Personnel Selection. Final on-job performance is dependant upon how well you match a person with a job. Satisfactory Job Performance not only requires a person who "can do" the job, but also a person who "will do" the job. Whilst both the "can do" and "will do" can be developed by training, the "will do" is comparatively difficult to achieve. Conversely if there is a strong element of "will do" in a person then the "can do" is easily developed by training.

Formal Courses. These are normally professionally conducted and considerable individual knowledge, skill and attitude is developed under ideal conditions.

Advantages:

- Instruction by experts.
- Tried and proven training techniques.
- A lot of learning in a short time.
- Standardisation of skills.
- Good for developing individual knowledge, skill and attitude.

Disadvantages:

- High cost.
- Man off the job.
- Not tailored to:
  - individual needs,
  - specific job needs,
- Training not available when required.

Ideally, formal courses should be attended if high levels of expertise in individuals is required. There is similar use of formal courses in the military and in civilian use. Examples are NZFP Garage Training Division courses and the ACC Chainsaw Video Programmes developed by Tasman.

On formal courses the employee learns the right way to do it, the safe way, and usually a lot of relevant knowledge and skill is developed by experts.

However, very often this performance is not sustained on the job, and we shall examine later how the military try to overcome this drop off in performance.

On-The-Job Training. Just like in industry, the most important training in the military is the on-job training which happens most days of every week of every year.

On-job training includes the following activities:

- Explaining, demonstrating and practicing an employee in job skills.
- Providing "feedback" on standards of performance.
- Arranging training or experience in a wider range of skills and tasks.

Advantages:

- Strengthens the supervisor-employee relationship.
- Clarifies what is acceptable and unacceptable in the way you want the job done.
- Training is relevant to individual employee needs.
- Training can be conducted when it is required.
- Develops cohesion and teamwork in work group.
- Good for developing effectiveness of work group.

Disadvantages:

- Difficult to conduct without interfering with production.
- Supervisor needs to develop some training skills.
- Environment can be unsuitable for training.

In the military the operational standard of a unit depends upon the effectiveness of the on-job training. Individuals attend excellent formal training but on-job training develops the effective application of these skills to specific tasks at hand.

On-job training also develops the teamwork and cohesiveness of the group which is necessary to be operationally effective. In the logging industry too, the extent and quality of on-job training will have a direct influence on the standards of operation of logging gangs and other groups of workers.

How To Conduct On-Job Training.

Set An Example - If you want your worker's performance to be "spit polished", then you must be an example of what you expect them to be. Your employees will imitate the standards you set.

Explain - Demonstrate - Practice - Follow this routine when conducting specific on-job training sessions. Having explained and demonstrated a skill ensure that you guide the learner with ample practice, and give feedback on his performance. It is during guided practice that most learning will occur.

Check On Performance Standards - Any deviation from the standards you expect must be brought to the attention of the employee, and if necessary, further guided practice arranged. If you fail to correct improper performance it will be considered that that level of performance is acceptable. As a rule, performance standards will fall to the level which you permit them to fall to.

Arrange Progressive Skill Development - Plan for sequential skills development. Ensure an employee new to a task is seconded to a competent mentor to gain progressive experience in that task. Make use of suitable formal training courses.

#### CONCLUSION

In the military we develop every supervisor in the basic skills of on-job instruction, thus giving the supervisor the confidence to set and maintain the standards of work performance that ensure the operational effectiveness of his group. As supervisors of logging operations you may well look at developing some instructional skills so that through on-job training your work group effectiveness can be developed.