

Individual Development: A key to success

One of the first questions that organisations ask when they are approached with training solutions is “What is in it for us?” Although one can understand the necessity to ensure a return on investment, training interventions are seldom recognised as a waste if aligned to the vision and the mission of the organisation. Creating an environment for the growth and development of staff members should therefore be one of the strategic goals of any company.

Government rates the investment in people very high and put legislation in place to support employers by means of funds and grants to allow staff to be trained and development effectively. Nobody can blame them for putting structures in place to make sure that accredited institutions offer programmes of high quality to industry.

In the recently published draft National Skills Development Strategy (out for public comments until mid July) it is stated that

‘The single greatest contributors to poverty are unemployment and low paid work. Government’s position is clear: the new development and growth path for South Africa requires the participation of all economically active South Africans in productive activity. Our policy levers to achieve faster growth, higher employment and reduced levels of poverty include skills development which must assist not only support the formal private sector growth but also labour-intensive industries, infrastructure investment, public service delivery and rural development. Quality education and training is needed at all levels.’

Experiential Technologies has taken up the challenge and therefore assists industry to take the responsibility for creating 'renewing' opportunities for their staff, and become learning organisations.

Despite the fact that staff development should be institutionally focused, the specific training needs of the individual staff member should not be disregarded. All aspects of the staff member, including their knowledge, skills and personal qualities should be developed. Opportunities should be created to increase their unique body of knowledge through a critical and analytical process of acquiring, practicing and adopting new knowledge.

A proper performance appraisal system that culminates in individual development plans is the key to success. Although staff members have to take responsibility for their own learning, Mentors play an important role to guide learners in the workplace activities and support them to reach their maximum potential.

Experience has led us to value the blending of on-line business simulations technology with assessment centre methodology. It is for this reason that we have invested in a unique and creative *Integrated On line Experiential Assessment Simulation Solution through business simulations (EAC)*.

Experiential Assessment Centres (EAC™) Solutions enabled us to create a customised e-assessment for in-house assessment and development centres. It imbeds collaboration between departments, training and line management, assessment and development simulations for the organisation.

When building the experiential assessment simulation, real business processes are combined with an exciting story to create a dynamic workplace simulation. The end result is a customised computer-based simulation that will address the business challenges and analyse the issues that the company is confronted with. This powerful learning application of using a simulation enables the participants to apply concepts learned in the lecture room and to recognise the tradeoffs surrounding major strategic business decisions. Participants face challenges, handle *crises*, set goals, develop strategies, exploit new opportunities and deal with uncertainty. Participants can see the outcome of their decisions as they affect stock value, market position and the bottom line. Each discovery, discussion or assessed competence can lead the way for participant reflection sessions and action steps to improve the organisational performance.

Experiential Technologies currently offers experiential assessment centres at a Senior Executive level (SENMEC™), Management level (MEC™) and a first-line manager level (SEC™).

A variety of training opportunities are then linked to the results of these interventions and Mentors and Coaches are trained to support learners effectively.

Learners can be registered on either Learner ships to obtain National certificates in Management, or should they choose not to go the qualification route, customised credit bearing training opportunities are available.

In the draft National Skills Development Strategy (2010) it is clear that “the role of skills development is central - but anticipating what skills will be needed, and when, is no easy matter.” Private and Public Training Providers have a role to play

to assist Government in this challenge and Experiential Technology gladly participate in this process.