

A Leadership and Development Needs
Assessment and Course Sequencing
at a Wisconsin Corporation

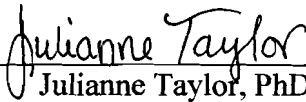
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to secure leadership and development course sequencing data and qualitative data to assess the value of learning and team leadership. The desired result of the development training will determine the outcome of the team members' achievements and how the sales leadership team interacts and functions together. The survey provided data for the senior sales leaders and president at Jack Link's Beef Jerky (JLBJ), a Wisconsin corporation located in Sawyer county, helping to make the decision to purchase leadership and development training.

The study focused on three key objectives: One objective was to identify training topics provided by Logic Opera (LO), LLC. Another objective was to prioritize the preferred training and timing for the sales leadership team at Jack Link's Beef Jerky (JLBJ). The last objective was to identify the sequencing of leadership and development

training courses at JLB. A bid was secured and a contract approved and executed with LO to provide only the three most critical leadership development areas as identified by the survey, which were 1) the role of the first line leader, 2) building effective teams, and 3) business performance measurement and work unit planning.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Background

This study will provide an overview of the history of training, the need for training analysis as it relates to leadership and development training, and how to determine training needs. Additionally, it will explore the economic considerations in providing training in domestic companies and the relationship that in-house training professionals or contract trainers provide as the training functions for business and industry. Moreover, when identifying training needs, it is important that when a company that just does training is hired, they need to be doing the training well. The researcher will also briefly discuss the effects that technology has had on predictions for training delivery methods. As corporations move to virtual corporate universities, the third party training providers need to play an aggressive role in becoming the provider of virtual corporate training curriculums (Baets & Van der Linden, 2003). Corporate clients must be able to estimate the value of the training provided and demonstrate a direct payback to the bottom line of the corporate clients served.

During the height of the industrial economy, the next trend in business and industry was to build factories, specialized labor, and improve scalability of production (Covey, 2004). During this time, workers learned how to take raw materials through an assembly line with very high levels of efficiency. Productivity increased by 50 times over the agrarian economy.

The current age is now referred to as the information/knowledge worker age. Because most people today have participated in this era of increased productivity, the advances in not only business and industry productivity, but also in personal efficiency

are not surprising. During the information/knowledge age worker period, over 90% of the industrial age workers will be downsized and no longer needed (Covey, 2004).

With such fast paced gains in productivity over the past 200 years and the relatively recent trends in globalization of business and industry, without question, corporations need awareness of the training trends that will keep their sales management and other managers' leadership and development skills current (Covey, 2004).

Considering the competitive business and industry climate now, and in the future, corporations must have skilled leaders focused on their business.

Dubois and Rothwell (2004) supported this theory. "Technological advances are transforming the way people live and work. When technology is used in learning, it is called a 'learning technology' and has two components: 1) presentation, how the training is presented; and 2) distribution, how the training is distributed" (p. 50).

Changing workforce characteristics and demographics mean accommodating new attitudes, life-styles, values, and motivations. Increased globalization means that more organizations are taking work off-site and off-shore. Accelerated change means organizations are becoming more flexible, networked, flat, diverse, and virtual. A renewed focus on workplace ethics and trust puts the spotlight on the integrity of management and leadership (Colterayhn & Davis, 2004).

Statement of the Problem

The researcher, who is a member of the Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc. (JLBJ) sales leadership team, and a master degree candidate in career and technical education was asked to facilitate a team building presentation based on the book *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* (1st ed.), authored by Patrick Lencioni and published by Jossey-Bass in 2002.

Following the first presentation session, the executive vice president, Michael McDonald, wanted to determine if building trust between team members and leadership and development training was a key objective for the sales leadership team.

Using needs assessment processes that were provided in the book *Instructional Analysis and Course Development*, authored by Howard D. Lee and Orville W. Nelson, the researcher conducted a needs analysis in conjunction with Logic Opera (LO), LLC, a consulting organization that provides leadership and development training and human resources consulting had established a prior relationship with JLBJ. This presented an opportunity to provide needs assessment tools and curriculum if it was determined the proposed training would meet the needs of the sales leadership team in developing the required leadership and development competencies the sales organization needed.

According to A.C. Neilson, August 2006, Scan Track tm report, JLBJ is a national market share leader in the U.S. meat snack category with a 40 percent share of market. JLBJ needs to stay ahead of the trends in leadership and development so their managers and leaders have the high quality skills needed to keep their business competitive and continue to deliver quality performance in the future for the corporation.

The relevance of this study was to provide JLBJ with a leadership and development survey to allow them to benchmark 1) the sequencing of leadership and development training courses, 2) training topics provided by LO, and 3) prioritize the top three training needs for the sales leadership team.

Specifically, this study focuses on the nine members of the sales leadership team at JLBJ and was conducted in Sawyer County, WI. Permission was granted by JLBJ to use data secured from the survey results to complete this study (see Appendix A).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to secure leadership and development course sequencing data and to collect qualitative data to assess the sales leadership team's value of learning and team leadership. Other purposes are to assess the topics and priorities of the development training and to determine the outcomes the team members are trying to achieve and to identify how well the sales leadership team works together.

The survey provided results for the senior sales leaders at JLBJ to make the decision to procure the leadership and development training. After the survey data was collected through an e-mail survey delivered August 24, 2006, the survey results were presented to the JLBJ executive committee. The executive committee voted and approved the procurement of the top three identified leadership and development topics to be facilitated by LO during up-coming channel managers meetings (otherwise described as senior sales manager meetings) over the next six months. The topics chosen were based on the results of the survey. The top three most critical leadership and development areas are the 1) role of the first line leader, 2) building effective teams, and 3) business performance measurement and work unit planning.

Research Objectives

The three objectives listed below identify the three key objectives of this research. JLBJ required data analysis to be completed in order to obtain leadership and development information for the corporation.

1. Identify the sequencing of leadership and development training courses at JLBJ, a Wisconsin corporation residing in Sawyer County, Wisconsin.
2. Identify training topics for JLBJ.

3. Prioritize the preferred training and timing for the sales leadership team at JLBJ.

Assumptions of the Study

M. McDonald (personal communication, August 2006) said "JLBJ will use the data from the survey to provide direction to improve the leadership of the senior sales team and develop the skills of the senior sales management team to effectively build trust and work as a team, sharing common goals and experiences at the organization." Another assumption was once the training topics were determined, the curriculum and other specific training needs would provide competencies that could be used by JLBJ senior sales leaders. This training provided the knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSA) needed by its senior sales managers to meet the ongoing mission of JLBJ by supplying improved KSA for the JLBJ sales leadership team in order to meet the future challenges of the competitive domestic and international meat snacks business for its customers, employees, stakeholders, and shareholders.

Definition of Terms

Some of the more common definitions used in published literature and in this document include the following:

Leadership and development training. According to LO, leadership and development training includes training and technical assistance which is delivered directly to its clients. Specifically LO, offers comprehensive training services that are geared to meet the individual needs of each business. LO will provide on-site seminars, classes, training, and technical assistance to JLBJ (Edmonson, 2006).

Performance director. According to Filipczak (as cited in Zielinski, 1997).

"Training managers are going to be renamed 'Performance Directors.' A performance director has a good idea what is happening in all areas of the company because he/she has been involved in projects at every level of the organization" (p. 556).

Training function. Barbazette (2005) called a training function a department in an organization that meets training and development needs, conducts needs assessments, designs and delivers training courses to meet business needs. The function can be centralized or decentralized and can be staffed by full-time or part-time staff. In some cases, the function may not be a separate department and may report to an operational department (p. 229).

Limitations of the Study

This study will be limited by the knowledge of the researcher and the limitations of the sample itself. This study sampled the total population of JLB sales leaders that were surveyed for the study. In educational research, when human subjects are involved, a study has the potential to produce data that is not reflective of the true opinions of the sample.

The survey has been used by LO with several other corporate clients and has provided LO a solid tool to determine training needs with its clients. However, it has not been tested for validity or reliability by the researcher. The instrument used was not tested for either validity or reliability and was not customized to meet the needs of JLB leadership and development training project.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Sawyer County, located in northern Wisconsin. A survey provided by LO consisted of 16 questions. The survey contained 12 ordinal ranking questions and four nominal open-ended questions.

The survey results were then tabulated and reviewed by senior sales management and presented to the sales leaders at a meeting for review and discussion on the next steps to move forward with the leadership and development training on January 10, 2007.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the 1) need for workforce development and training; 2) history of training in the United States; 3) role of the training manager; 4) outsourcing the training function; 5) determination of training needs and; 6) economic considerations for training in United States companies.

Need for Workforce Development and Training

Corporate restructuring will reshape the business environment. Downsizing, more small businesses, a lack of job security, and low employee morale will continue to affect the type of training and how it is delivered (Bassi & Cheney, 1997).

As workforce training shifts to performance improvement, the focus of training departments will engage in organizational development, industrial and organizational psychology, and strategic human resources to provide performance improvement interventions (Colteryahn & Davis, 2004). Integrated high performance work systems will proliferate. Training functions, like all business units, are being forced to re-examine their role and focus more on measurable results. The new emphasis will be on forming systems that are aligned to the separate efforts of functions, departments, and people.

In the future, companies will transform into learning organizations. In 1995, 94% of the corporations polled by the American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) were shifting to learning culture organizations (Bassi & Cheney, 1997). As this relates to training, these organizations will meet training and development needs, conduct needs assessments, design and deliver training courses to meet business needs. The training function can also deliver individual development plans for full-time or part-time

staff, and in some cases, the training function may provide competency based training (Bassi & Cheney, 1997).

Technology has created significant improvement and availability of training delivery options (Bassi & Cheney, 1997). Today contract training organizations can provide web-based software via computer networks or provide multimedia software. Video conferencing also offers an excellent option for multi-site delivery and bringing training to people's worksites. Training functions will use new resources to deliver training resources. To meet the demand for quality instruction, training departments are using web-based structures that are supported by networks of internal and external providers, such as community colleges and consultants that provide business and industry training services.

It is also important that training benefits the bottom line for the organizations that purchase training (Colteryahn & Davis, 2004). In today's business environment, because of the need to measure results and the return on investment for training, it is essential for the organization to consider the investment carefully. Outsourcing may be an option if no training function exists or to eliminate the fixed cost of training departments. The focus will be on purchasing training with predictable cost which can control high or unpredictable cost for the organizations.

This study also discussed the effects that technology has had and predictions for what it may continue to have in training delivery methods. As corporations consider virtual corporate universities, the third party training providers need to become the provider of virtual corporate training curriculums (Baets & Van Der Linden, 2003).

Corporate clients must be able to estimate the value of the training provided and demonstrate a direct pay back to the bottom line of the corporation.

Role of the Training Manager

Performance directors today need a head for business if they are to survive the turbulent times of the present and future (Filipczak, 1997). In the past, a training manager may have been a used-up executive placed in a training role to keep him or her from creating any issues or problems for the organization. Perhaps some organizations have training departments with knowledgeable professionals who understand learning technologies and how to present and deliver training. Members of training functions may have been sales or line managers and can collaborate with departments they work with in order to understand their training needs. Training managers are going to be renamed "performance directors." A performance director should have a sense of what is occurring in several departments at the organization to be able to provide direction and implementation of training services for the different departments at the organization.

Outsourcing of Training

Outsourcing could be defined as the contracting of outside organizations to provide learning technologies for your organization's training needs (Colteryaahn & Davis, 2004). Outsourcing has the potential to be the most economic method of providing, presenting and delivering training content. At the time of this research, LO had the potential to be the primary source for providing leadership and development training programs to the targeted population at JLB. With ever increasing pressure to reduce cost and produce results, corporations will recognize the value of outsourcing learning technologies to reduce fixed cost and manage unpredictable cost associated with training.

How Training Needs are Determined and Required Competencies Learned

Dubois and Rothwell (2004) found that a competency model defined as "what human capabilities or traits must a worker have in order to produce this work in, preferable and exemplary manner, on time and at a high level of quality"(p. 48). Dubois and Rothwell additionally stated competency models need to be developed to accommodate the variety of knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSA) that support agreed to behavior or performance competencies to be achieved by trainees. Behaviors and performance can be applied to any role or responsibility to develop a competency model. The same can be said for team and individual development plans as well (p.48).

Witkin and Altschuld (1995, as cited in Lee and Nelson, 2006) said a needs assessment is a process consisting of a set of activities and procedures that identifies the merit or worth of a training or education program. Needs assessment is often described as seeking the difference between 'what is' and 'what should be' or finding the gaps between current and desired performance within an organization or a community. (p. 75)

At JLBJ, a needs assessment was used to select curriculum and training that would provide and meet the needs of the sales leadership team in developing trust and required leadership and development competencies the sales organization needed.

Economic Consideration of Business and Industry Training

A critical question concerning learning technologies is cost-effectiveness compared with traditional training approaches. In an effort to reduce cost, the use of corporate intranets or other technologies can reduce training time and costs (Bassi & Cheney, 1997). Although limited research is available comparing the cost effectiveness

of learning technologies verses classroom training some of the advantages are decentralized training, individualized self paced training, 24-hour availability, and reduced resource requirements.

Training that is required must benefit the financial considerations for the organizations that purchase training for their organizations (Bassi & Cheney, 1997). In today's business world, training cost must be measured. Determining a positive cost-effective value varies with each situation. As corporations move to learning technologies, the cost per trainee typically is lower than traditionally deployed training. Third party training providers need to play an aggressive role in becoming the provider of virtual corporate training curriculums. Corporate clients must be able to estimate the value of the training and measure a pay back to the corporation.

Summary

Training plans should be developed with input from supervisors and managers in the needs assessment process to develop training (Barbazette, 2005). Then the presentation and distribution method to deliver the training should also be agreed to by the supervisors and managers requesting the training. This course of action should create ownership for the training and provide first hand information of the presentation and delivery methods that will be used to deploy the training content and maximize the training investment.

Training includes several types or components. JLB like most corporations in America engages in “qualifying training,” which helps people become productive, meeting the basic performance expectations of the work they are hired to perform (Dubois & Rothwell 2004, p. 5).

Training needs are developed based on the basic KSAs to meet the day to day job requirements (Dubois & Rothwell, 2004). Managers know that work needs to be accomplished everyday. Job descriptions communicate what skills a worker needs versus what the job entails. JLBj knows work must be done, and what the KSAs of each position are, and what KSA the employee must have to be successful at JLBj. Managers and leaders are asking what KSA or competencies must a worker have to produce work at acceptable or perhaps exceeding the expected level of performance for the position at the organization.

Need assessments should be conducted and KSAs should be reviewed for all the work that needs to be accomplished verses the jobs that need to be filled. By conducting the leadership and development training survey, JLBj has initiated a training program based on the work that needs to be competed to keep JLBj competitive in the challenging growth years ahead.

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

Jack Link's Beef Jerky (JLBJ) in Sawyer County, Wisconsin, needed further study into the utilization and needs of leadership and the development of training programs for their corporation. This study deployed a survey that identified leadership and development course sequencing and an assessment of the qualitative opinions on learning, the development outcomes, and how well the sales management team works together at JLBJ.

Methodology

The study was descriptive and directed by analyzing the data derived from JLBJ. A survey provided by Logic Opera (LO), LLC contained 16 questions. The survey consisted of 12 ordinal ranking questions and four nominal open-ended questions. The survey was delivered August 30, 2006 by e-mail to nine key sales leaders at JLBJ. The due date for the return of the survey was September 20, 2006. The results were then tabulated by the executive administrative assistant at JLBJ, reviewed by senior sales management, and data were presented to the sales leaders at a meeting for review and discussion.

Subject Selection and Description

As part of this study, the researcher began the population selection process at JLBJ. The selection process was very straight forward. The sales leadership level is the work group accountable and responsible for executing the top line revenue growth and bottom line financial results for the company. This work group is responsible for international and domestic sales at JLBJ and consists of senior leaders who are vice

presidents and directors of the sales and sales finance functions as well as retail services and customer service. This work group also is responsible for the performance and development of the staff that reports to this management level at JLBj. This work group reports to the executive vice president of sales who requested the researcher work with LO to complete a needs assessment survey with this targeted work group that is responsible for sales leadership at JLBj. The researcher determined the number of team leaders and managers that were selected based on the employees who were senior sales leaders and met the corporate needs as the population to be surveyed for this study.

Instrumentation

The study analyzed data from a survey of the sales leadership team of JLBj. Permission to use this data was provided by JLBj (Appendix A). The survey cover letter also accompanied the survey at the time it was e-mailed to the participants of this study (Appendix B). First, permission to use the information provided in the survey was provided by LO (Appendix C). Second, the researcher collected data on all content topics offered by LO. Third, the researcher determined the number of team leaders and managers that were selected to meet the corporation needs as the target population for this study. An implied consent form was also disseminated with the survey at the time it was e-mailed to the participants (Appendix D). The researcher then counted all survey responses listed on the data base which were entered by an administrative assistant. A Likert scale with (1-5) rating system was used to sequence the course content requirement for JLBj. The Likert scale was based on the following: 1) low importance, 2) somewhat important, 3) average importance, 4) very important, and 5) extremely important. The researcher then ranked every question based on the mean score derived

from the Likert scale survey results and prioritized course offerings based on the data collected. Finally, to complete the study, the researcher used the results of the survey and the facts needed by JLB senior leadership team to make a procurement decision.

The survey questions were provided by LO and the survey was an exact duplicate of the survey provided by LO (see Appendix E). This process was used to retain consistency with the course content offered by LO and to use the data to further identify sequencing and prioritization of training needs determined by the survey.

The survey also provided four nominal questions to assess the opinions of the sales leaders relating to 1) the value employees place on learning, 2) the development outcomes they are trying to achieve, 3) where they believe the team does well, and 4) areas of improvement in regards to teamwork for the organization. The survey was designed by LO for leadership and development assessment and is not statistically valid according to J. Hartley, a LO consultant (personal communication, April 24, 2007). Hartley stated the survey questions were pulled together by several of their clients consisting of a group made up of middle managers and executives from multiple disciplines and business lines. LO held extensive focus group discussions and asked participants specifically what their people would need to be successful as a manager. LO then had them detail out what was missing in their current leadership curriculum and what concepts could be further detailed that would make a difference in their business and in ensuring their success on the job. The result of the conversations and data gathering was the beginning of the LO leadership and development series curriculum.

Hartley also stated that while the survey has not been validated, LO did use a very practical, real world approach. The process included pragmatic, research-based questions

given directly out in the field. LO's process involved several individuals in leadership positions identifying what they would like to see develop in their own first line managers and supervisors. This alignment across several industries and disciplines made certain the content developed would address past, current, and future leaders alike.

The survey packet sent to the leadership team contained an e-mail from the researcher to conduct the survey on the behalf of JLBj. The directions on the first page of the survey explained the purpose of the survey and it's utilization by JLBj and the implied consent statement required by the University of Wisconsin- Stout Institutional Review Board. It should also be noted that JLBj issued a human resources disclaimer letter that also accompanied the e-mailed survey packet stating that no data from this study would impact the participant's employment at JLBj (see Appendix F).

The survey was distributed via an e-mail through the JLBj secured corporate e-mail system for ease of return to the researcher. Although the survey was not confidential, only the executive administrator, executive vice president, and the researcher received the survey results. The survey had 16 questions with a number of nominal and ordinal questions. Additionally, a Likert-type rating was included to evaluate the courses offered by LO.

Data Collection

Permission to conduct the survey was granted on August 29, 2006 by Mike McDonald, Senior Vice President of sales at JLBj. The managers and team leaders returned the survey to the executive administrative assistant for tabulation via corporate e-mail by September 8, 2006. The administrative assistant provided a recap of the data without the participants' names to be reviewed by the researcher and the executive vice

president of sales. The survey was completed in an expeditious manner and a follow-up e-mail was sent to remind non-responders to return the survey on September 3, 2006, providing a second opportunity to have a copy of the survey resent if they misplaced or deleted the original survey.

Data Analysis

A total of nine surveys were returned, resulting in a 100% return rate. When the data were received by the administrative assistant, they were manually entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and computations for percents and frequencies were calculated. Because the majority of the questions were nominal and ordinal in form, the summary of frequencies and percentages could be tabulated to meet the objectives of the study.

Limitations

This study was limited by the knowledge of the researcher and the limitations of the sample population itself. This study used data from a sample of the population that will be the benefactors of the data. In educational research involving human subjects, a study has the potential to produce data that is not reflective of the true opinions of the sample.

The instrument used was not tested for either validity or reliability and was provided by LO to determine leadership and development needs of JLBJ and to prioritize course sequencing; it also supplied opinions for leadership and development training at JLBJ.

Computation errors on the part of the researcher or the executive administrative assistant were possible during the manual calculations of the survey data and could

distort the final results of the study. In order to limit this risk, the data was analyzed by the administrative assistant and the researcher for accuracy. Lastly, the study is also limited by the number of respondents to the survey and selection limited only to sales leadership and managers at JLBJ.

Chapter IV: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to secure leadership and development course sequencing data and qualitative data to assess the value of learning and team leadership, to obtain desired results of the development training, and to determine the outcomes the team members were trying to achieve and to identify how well the sales leadership team works together. The survey provided results for the senior sales leaders and JLBJ President at the Wisconsin corporation located in Sawyer County to make the decision to procure the leadership and development training. Data was collected through an e-mail survey delivered August 24, 2006, consisting of 12 ordinal questions and four nominal questions. A designated sample of JLBJ employees was used to create the sample for the survey. The survey was directed at key sales and marketing leaders within the organization.

The quantitative results as well as the qualitative opinion aspects of the survey were reviewed with specific item analysis for all the questions in the survey that are analyzed in this chapter. The Likert scale was based on the following: 1) low importance, 2) somewhat important, 3) average importance, 4) very important, and 5) extremely important.

Item Analysis

Item 1: The role of the first line leader. This item asked respondents to rank the importance of learning what it takes to be a great boss and how to effectively get work done through others. Also involved was an increasing self-awareness of strengths as a leader/manager and identifying opportunities to develop further. The nine responses to

the first question ranked the role of the first line leader as one of the most critical needs of the organization. The average score for this question was 4.11 based on the 5 point Likert Scale.

Item 2: Working styles. This item asked respondents to identify the importance of understanding how two basic dimensions of human behavior create differences in working “styles.” It also inquired into receiving feedback from co-workers regarding how the participant is perceived in terms of style, strengths, and potential blind spots. Working styles was used to build trust between JLBJ managers on the team. Working styles in question 2 had the same frequency of response as project management, ranking as the fourth out of eight for frequency of importance to the organization. Working styles had an average score of 3.56 and, although 67% of the respondents ranked it as very important, no respondents ranked it as an extreme need of the organization.

Item 3: Conflict, communications and negotiations. This item dealt with understanding, working through, and preventing conflict in the workplace using interest-based problem solving and communication skills. In terms of frequency, question 3 was in the second position out of eight, tying with coaching. The average score was 3.89. Although 44% of respondents ranked this question as an extremely important need, 56% ranked it as only an average need of the organization. This training topic would be considered as the fifth most important training topic for the organization.

Item 4: Time management and business communication today. This item asked respondents to rank the importance of learning about the role self-management plays in time management and skills for more effective planning and prioritizing, scheduling, and minimizing interruptions. This question ranked fifth out of eight in frequencies, making it

a lower-priority leadership and development concern for the organization. It scored an average of 3.67. This training topic was the seventh most critical training need of the organization.

Item 5: Business performance measurement and work unit planning. This item dealt with the importance of reading and understanding high-level financial statements and the importance of identifying and monitoring other high level performance indicators such as customer and employee satisfaction. This was considered one of the top three issues for the organization with the highest ranking in frequency and a 4.11 score. Of the respondents, 33% ranked business performance and work unit planning as extremely important, followed by 45% ranking it as very important, and 22% as average in importance.

Item 6: Impact staffing. This item asked respondents to rank learning the important key steps in preparation for conducting a selection interview. This training would also involve learning how to develop performance-based interview questions and recognize what is legal or illegal to ask in an interview. "Impact staffing" was ranked eighth in frequency and was the lowest ranked score of 2.56. With only 45% of the respondents ranking this leadership and development topic as somewhat important, 22% ranked it as very important, or of average importance.

Item 7: Employee orientation and on-the-job training (OJT). This item involves acquiring techniques for getting new employees off to a good start, how to develop a structured plan for conducting OJT and gain tools for avoiding problems, and learning to foster high performance in employees by communicating high expectations. This item was ranked sixth out of eight in frequency of response and had a mean score of 3.44. This

leadership and development training topic would be prioritized as the 10th out of the 12 topics of importance for training at the organization.

Item 8: Employee performance management and coaching. This item involved learning techniques and tools for managing employee performance, beginning with an effective goal setting process. For frequency, this item was ranked second out of eight, tying with "conflict, communications, and negotiations." "Coaching" had an average score of 3.89. Coaching would be the fourth or fifth leadership and development training course offered to the organization.

Item 9: Building effective teams. This item involved an experiential team-building simulation which teaches barriers to teamwork and critical success factors for teams and teamwork. This was a top priority for the organization with a high frequency ranking with "role of the first line leader" and "building effective teams." With a 4.11 average score, "building effective teams" would be one of the top three training topics needed by the organization. It is also important to point out that 45% of the respondents rated this topic as extremely important, 33% as very important, and 11% average and somewhat important.

Item 10: Creativity and innovation. This item relates to understanding the importance of fostering creativity and innovation in the workplace. For frequency, this item was ranked seventh out of eight in frequency of response, and had an average score of 3.11. The course topic of creativity and innovation would be the 11th course offered based on the results of this study.

Item 11: Problem solving and risk-smart decision making. This item asked respondents to rank the importance of learning how to use an established seven-step

process to assist data-based decision making for problem solving or process improvement. It also involved comparing and contrasting various means of collecting and displaying data to help identify the root cause of problems, and identify potential solutions with the greatest impact on solving problems and improving and sustaining process capability. Problem solving and risk-smart decision making reviewed in this question was ranked third in frequency out of eight. The average score for this item was 3.67. This training topic would be prioritized as the sixth topic on which the organization would require training. Thirty-five percent of respondents ranked this topic as an extremely important need, followed by 45% as an average need, and a total of 11% of respondents indicated that this item was very low and somewhat important.

Item 12: Project management. This item asked respondents to rank the importance of learning about critical skills for leading a successful project team. It would involve how to use fundamental tools like a work breakdown structure, Gantt chart, PERT diagram, and project costing worksheet to effectively plan and manage three major project parameters: quality, time and cost. “Project management” was ranked as the fourth and had an average score of 3.56. There was a considerable spread in responses: 34% ranked it as extremely important, 22% deemed the topic very important or of average importance, and 11% as somewhat important to the organization. Project planning would be prioritized as the eighth priority for training at the organization.

Table 1

Summary of the Results of the 12 Ordinal Questions Reported in the Study

| Training Priority | Rank Order | Average Score | Survey Question Number and Topic |
|----------------------|---------------|------------------|---|
| 1 | 1 | 4.11 | 1. Role of the first line leader |
| 2 | 1 | 4.11 | 5. Work unit planning |
| 3 | 1 | 4.11 | 9. Building effective teams |
| 4 | 2 | 3.89 | 8. Coaching |
| 5 | 2 | 3.89 | 3. Conflict, communications, & negotiations |
| 6 | 3 | 3.67 | 11. Problem solving & decision making |
| 7 | 3 | 3.67 | 4. Communication today |
| 8 | 4 | 3.56 | 12. Project management |
| 9 | 4 | 3.56 | 2. Working styles |
| 10 | 5 | 3.44 | 7. Training |
| 11 | 6 | 3.11 | 10. Creativity and innovation |
| 12 | 7 | 2.56 | 6. Impact staff |

Table 1 ranks the sequencing for the training topics for the organization based on the prioritization of the training needs as identified in the survey by the sales and marketing leaders at the organization. The survey also provided four nominal questions to assess the opinions of the sales leaders to determine 1) the value employees place on learning, 2) the development outcomes they are trying to achieve, 3) where they believe

the team does well, and 4) areas of improvement in regards to teamwork for the organization. Following is a synopsis of these results.

Do your employees value learning? All respondents had a positive view and were excited about offering more formalized leadership and development training at the organization. For opinion-based questions, the views of each manager did vary, but it is clear based on the responses that the organization is ready for more advanced leadership and development training. One manager was quoted as saying, “Yes, they want to continue to learn and grow both professionally and personally.” See Appendix H for more individual responses to this question.

As a result of development, what outcomes are you trying to achieve? Several different training outcomes were identified by the participants in the study. The general consensus of the senior sales leaders was that the potential to train sales personnel in the areas of leadership and development that was identified by the managers who participated in this survey was at an acceptable level for their direct reports. When reviewing the responses, the researcher surmised that the outcomes were focused on staff motivation, lowering turnover, and increasing productivity in the sales organization. See Appendix I for more details.

Where does the “team” work well? The data (see Appendix J) indicates that the managers perform well as a team when they need to deliver results. They also stated a need for overall goals to engage employees and to be held accountable in achieving desired results for the corporation. The researcher agrees that the company, through its managers, can achieve top line business results which, in turn, is a big win for the corporation.

Where are there opportunities for improvement with regard to teamwork? The data (see Appendix J) would conclude the largest opportunity for improvement is communication and direction of the goals for the organization. Additionally, the managers indicated a desire for more cross functional sharing of best practices, and lastly, building trust and corporate alignment. One manager said, “We need to develop company strategic objectives supported by all levels. Share the strategic direction and goals with everyone in the company.” The researcher would agree with the summation of the managers to insure the company communicates the strategic direction and goals for the organization.

Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of this study was to assess the need at JLBJ to purchase leadership and development training and prioritize the courses to be offered using quantitative data. Additionally, the study also provided qualitative data with the answers to four nominal questions which assessed the opinions of the sales leaders to determine 1) the value employees place on learning, 2) the development outcomes they are trying to achieve, 3) where they believe the team does well, and 4) areas of improvement in regards to teamwork for the organization.

The survey provided results for the senior sales leaders and president at the Wisconsin corporation located in Sawyer County to make the decision to procure the leadership and development training. Data was collected through an e-mail survey delivered August 24, 2006.

The three objectives listed below identify the key objectives JLBJ needed data analysis completed on in order to obtain leadership and development information.

1. Identify the sequencing of leadership and development training courses at a Wisconsin corporation residing in Sawyer County, Wisconsin.
2. Identify topical areas of training provided by Logic Opera, LLC.
3. Prioritize the preferred training and timing for the sales leadership team at the Wisconsin corporation.

Response to the Three Objectives of the Study

The three identifiable key objectives needed for the JLBJ data analysis basis was completed thus obtaining leadership and development information for the Wisconsin corporation.

Objective 1: Identify the sequencing of leadership and development training courses at a Wisconsin corporation residing in Sawyer County, Wisconsin. After the results were reviewed by the senior and executive managers, the training procurement process was initiated. A bid was secured and a contract approved and executed with LO to provide only the three most critical leadership development areas as identified by the survey which were 1) the role of the first line leader, 2) building effective teams, and 3) business performance measurement and work unit planning. The three leadership areas identified were sequenced to be the first three courses delivered by LO.

Objective 2: Identify training topics provided by Logic Opera, LLC. The areas of training were 1) the role of the first line leader; 2) working styles; 3) conflict, communications, and negotiations; 4) time management and business communications today; 5) business performance measurement and work unit planning; 6) impact staffing; 7) employee orientation and on the job training; 8) employee performance management and coaching; 9) building effective teams; 10) creativity and innovation; 11) problem solving and risk smart decision making; and 12) project management.

Objective 3: Prioritize the preferred training and timing for the sales leadership team at JLBJ. Based on the results of the study, Logic Opera, LLC, will provide the three most critical leadership development areas which were 1) The role of the first line leader, 2) building effective teams, and 3) business performance measurement and work unit

planning. The timing of the courses will coincide with the channel managers' meeting and will be conducted on a one course per month basis until the leadership and development series is completed. After completion of the top three courses selected, an evaluation will take place to determine the continuance and completion of the remaining nine courses.

Summary of Qualitative Assessment of Learning and Team Leadership

The survey also provided four nominal questions to assess the opinions of the sales leaders to determine 1) the value employees place on learning, 2) the development outcomes they are trying to achieve, 3) where they believe the team does well, and 4) areas of improvement in regards to teamwork for the organization. Below is a summary of each of the four qualitative opinion-based questions.

Open-ended question one: Do your employees value learning? All respondents had a positive view and were excited about offering more formalized leadership and development training at the organization (see Appendix G). One manager stated "I think not only do they value learning, but they embrace it." As opinion-based questions are highly subjective, the views of each manager did vary, but a clear message was delivered by the senior sales managers that the organization is ready for more advanced leadership and development training.

Open-ended question two: What development outcomes are you trying to achieve? Several different training outcomes were identified by the participants in the study. Some key outcomes identified were building trust, improved communication, outline expectations, and ensure employee alignment with corporate objectives and goals. Each of

the topics of this survey has the potential to train personnel in an area of leadership and development that was identified by the managers who participated in this survey.

Open-ended question three: Assess where the team does well. The data indicated that the managers perform well as a team when they need to deliver results. They also stated a need for overall goals to engage employees and to be held accountable in achieving desired results for the corporation.

Response to open-ended question four: Identify areas of improvement in regards to teamwork for the organization. The biggest opportunity for improvement would be communication and providing direction and goals for the organization. Additionally, the managers indicated a desire for more cross functional sharing of best practices and, lastly, building trust and corporate alignment.

Conclusions

The study was completed to assess the need to purchase leadership and development training at JLB. The study provided prioritization of training topic needs based on quantitative data to provide sequencing of the most critical areas of leadership and development training first. Additionally, qualitative data was used to assess the value of learning and team leadership, the desired result of the development training, to determine the outcomes the team members were trying to achieve, and identify how well the sales leadership team works together.

Recommendations

Purchase training. Results of the survey provided a needs analysis of leadership and development course sequencing. Training must have an effect on profitability to justify the cost involved in purchasing it. When the cost of the leadership and

development training program was considered, the final decision to purchase was based on the benefits to the corporation such as personnel development and business improvement based on improved team leadership. JLBJ made a decision that leadership and development training would provide a return on investment.

The training procurement decision was only approved after review by the Vice President of Finance, Human Resources, Sales, and the President of the company. After the results were reviewed by the senior and executive managers, the training procurement process was initiated and a bid was secured and a contract was approved and executed with LO to provide training on the three most critical leadership and development areas: 1) role of the first line leader; 2) building effective teams; and 3) business performance measurement and work unit planning. Table 1 recaps the survey results of the ordinal questions for course sequencing at JLBJ.

Recommendations Relating to this Study

Increase virtual training capability. The final aspect of the literature review of training was to discuss the effects that technology has had and will continue to have in training delivery methods. As corporations move to virtual corporate universities, the third party training providers need to play an aggressive role in becoming the provider of virtual corporate training curricula. As technology evolves and information must be communicated in a fast and efficient manner, intranet sites, and corporate web-based learning services will be utilized by corporations to provide training programs, for all aspects of the enterprise, not just sales and marketing.

Currently, JLBJ uses third party providers for basic skills training. JLBJ also contracted with LO to conduct leadership and development training. As the corporation

continues to grow, it needs to identify a Performance Director to lead employee performance and development for the enterprise. Additionally a web-based educational tool such as Blackboard[™] could serve a dual purpose of offering a platform for corporate wide course content delivery, but also could be used to improve the measurement of different work units, thereby increasing the measurement capabilities for the organization (Newman, 2006). The author recommends that JLBJ further research the capabilities of a Blackboard[™] type learning platform for its future virtual corporate university opportunity.

Continual training needs assessments. Additionally, it is recommended that JLBJ complete an assessment after the leadership and development courses are presented to the leaders at JLBJ. A learning contract could be presented and signed forming a relationship with JLBJ and the participants receiving the training. The contract creates a mutual understanding of what the training is about, and a commitment on the part of the learner to value and apply the training being provided by the company. This is a great concept, and perhaps has implications for the public education community.

Additional research. Finally, this study serves as an opportunity to do more research into the understanding of corporate needs assessment and course sequencing technique. It could be an opportunity to further explore the issues reviewed within this study. Some topics of interest may be to conduct an analysis of the sales management team to assess the implementation of the selected leadership and development topics by the JLBJ sales leadership team. Moreover, it may be beneficial to assess the potential benefits of leadership and development training to the next subordinate layer of sales management and other cross functional departments at JLBJ.

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Appendix A: Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc. Permission Letter

December 4, 2006

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

We are aware that George W. Ronnestrand is pursuing his Plan B research thesis requirement for his candidacy toward a master's degree in the Career and Technical Education program. Related to this project, he has elected to survey sales leaders at Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc. a Wisconsin Corporation. We grant permission to affiliate Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc. in his efforts to collect data via an internet survey and to analyze such data, draw conclusions and complete his research thesis entitled "A Leadership and Development Needs Assessment and Course Sequencing at a Wisconsin Corporation." The information resulting from the research will provide information on the Leadership and Development needs of Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc. And additionally provide a prioritization of the course sequencing based on the needs of the sales leaders who took part in the survey and provide course sequencing to Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc. The data may be shared with others at the corporation as well as partners who may have an interest.

Sincerely,

Michael Mc Donald
Executive Vice President of Sales
Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc.

Appendix B: Survey Cover Letter

Graduate Study Survey:

A Leadership and Development Needs Assessment and Course Sequencing at a Wisconsin Corporation

As part of my master's degree program in Career and Technical Education at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, I am currently exploring research entitled "A Leadership and Development needs Assessment and Course Sequencing at a Wisconsin Corporation." Jack Link Beef Jerky, Inc., a Wisconsin Corporation was selected to conduct an educational research project in the assessment of leadership development needs and the sequence of a leadership development curriculum provided by Logic Opera, LLC, Minneapolis, MN. I respectfully requested the completion of an on-line survey by selected individuals in sales leadership positions at Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc.

Information gathered from the survey results could benefit Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc. in the current leadership and development needs of the organization. In addition, it will provide a prioritization of the course sequencing based on the needs of the sales leaders who took part in the survey and provide course sequencing to Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc.

You are invited to take a moment to help the researcher gather information about current leadership and development needs of the organization as well as provide direction based on the survey to sequence the courses based on the prioritized needs of the organization. The survey was completed voluntarily and designed to take a minimal amount of time to complete. Please review the enclosed Consent Statement, complete the on-line survey that followed, and return the completed survey via company e-mail. Individual responses will be kept confidential; data and information will be compiled in aggregate form only. Survey results will be available to all participants upon request, Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc. and Logic Opera, LLC.

Sincerely,

George W. Ronnestrand, Researcher
Graduate student, University of Wisconsin-Stout
ronnestrandg@uwstout.edu
715.595.6142

Appendix C: Logic Opera, LLC, Permission Letter

December 4, 2006

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

We are aware that George W. Ronnestrand is pursuing his Plan B research thesis requirement for his candidacy toward a master's degree in the Career and Technical Education program, related to this project, he has elected to survey sales leaders at Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc. a Wisconsin Corporation. We grant permission to affiliate Logic Opera, LLC, in his efforts to collect data via an internet survey and to analyze such data, draw conclusions and complete his research thesis entitled "A Leadership and Development Needs Assessment and Course Sequencing at a Wisconsin Corporation." The information resulting from the research will provide information on the Leadership and Development needs of Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc. And additionally provide a prioritization of the course sequencing based on the needs of the sales leaders who took part in the survey and provide course sequencing to Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc. The data may be shared with others at the corporation as well as partners who may have an interest.

Sincerely,

Michael R. Braun
Managing Partner
Logic Opera, LLC

Appendix D: Implied Consent Statement

Implied Consent Statement

Project Title:

A Leadership and Development Needs Assessment and Course Sequencing at a Wisconsin Corporation

Research Description:

The purpose of this study is to determine the current leadership and development needs of Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc. a Wisconsin Corporation and to sequence leadership and development courses based on the needs of the corporation as provided by sales leadership at the corporation. Through the use of an on-line survey, the researcher provided information on the leadership and development needs of Jack Link Beef Jerky, Inc. and determined course content based on the identified needs as derived from the on-line survey to Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc. Course content survey questions and course content was provided by Logic Opera, LLC, and the selected party to provide the curriculum in leadership and development to Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc.

Risks and Benefits:

The completion of the survey represents minimal risk. The research is designed to determine the leadership and development needs of the corporation and to sequence the curriculum based on the priorities of the senior sales leaders who participated in the survey.

Time Commitment:

Please be assured that individual responses to the requested survey will be kept confidential and your name will not be indicated in the final report. The goal of the survey will information on the leadership and development needs of Jack Link Beef Jerky, Inc. and determined course content based on the identified needs as derived from the on-line survey to Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc. Course content survey questions and course content was provided by Logic Opera, LLC, and the selected party to provide the curriculum in leadership and development to Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc.

Confidentiality:

Please be assured that individual responses to the requested survey will be kept confidential and your name will not be indicated on any documents. Data will be compiled and reported in aggregate with no persons identified in the final report.

Right to Withdraw:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences to you. Should you choose to participate and later wish to withdraw from the study, there is no way to identify an anonymous document after it has been turned into the investigator.

IRB Approval:

This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Wisconsin-Stout Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and university policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study, please contact the Investigator or advisor. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator.

Investigator:

George W. Ronnestrand
One Snack Food Lane
Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc.
Minong, WI
715.595.6142
gronnestrand@jacklinks.com

IRB Administrator:

Sue Foxwell, Director Research Services
152 Vocational Rehabilitation Building
UW-Stout
Menomonie, WI
715.232.2477
foxweels@uwstout.edu

Research Advisor: Dr. Julianne Taylor, 715.232.2477, Taylorj@uwstout.edu

Statement of Consent: By completing the following survey, you agree to participate in the project entitled: "A Leadership and Development Needs Assessment and Course Sequencing at a Wisconsin Corporation."

Appendix E: Survey Instrument

This project has been reviewed by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46

TO: Jack Link Beef Jerky Team Leaders:

August 24, 2006

Subject: Setting the direction for our strategic objectives

Your input is requested in developing the direction for our strategic objectives and the human resource development that will be needed to achieve our strategic initiatives over the next five years.

I would ask that you please complete the attached survey and rank each item on the survey based on a 1 to 5 Likert scale.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Low Importance | Somewhat Important | Average Importance | Very Important | Extremely Important |

Your response is required by September 8, 2006, so we can formulate a discussion at the sales managers meeting to be held in Minneapolis September 20, 2006. Please return your completed survey.

Jack Link's is looking to deliver developmental workshops for its supervisors and managers. We would like to ask for your input so we can provide an approach which addresses your most critical areas of need. The attached survey provides a listing of critical skills for those in first-line to middle-levels of leadership (team leaders, supervisors, managers).

Thanks, in advance, for completing this confidential survey.

Leadership Training and Development Survey

1. Rank: ____ **THE ROLE OF FIRST LINE LEADER:** Learn what it takes to be a great boss and how to effectively get work done through others. Learn techniques for effective delegation and for selling new ideas and change to others in order to adapt to today's ever changing business environment. Increase your self-awareness of your own strengths as a leader/manager and where you have opportunities to develop further.

2. Rank: ____ **WORKING STYLES:** Understand how two basic dimensions of human behavior create differences in working "styles." Receive feedback from co-workers regarding how you are perceived in terms of style and learn the strengths and potential blindspots of your style. Learn how to recognize working style in others and know how to modify your style when working with them to reduce conflicts and achieve better results.

3. Rank: ____ **CONFLICT, COMMUNICATIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS:** Understand, work through and prevent conflict in the workplace using interest-based problem solving and communication skills. Recognize your conflict handling tendencies and learn when/how to use a full range of conflict handling modes effectively.

4. Rank: ____ **TIME MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS COMMUNICATION TODAY:** Recognize the important role self-management plays in time management. Assess your current time management tendencies and practices. Learn skills for more effective planning and prioritizing, scheduling, minimizing interruptions, etc. Gain techniques for working smarter and for improving "team time management" as well as your own. Learn techniques for utilizing email and voicemail efficiently as well as how to plan and run effective meetings.

5. Rank: ____ **BUSINESS PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND WORK UNIT PLANNING:** Learn to read and understand high-level financial statements and the importance of identifying and monitoring other high level performance indicators such as customer and employee satisfaction. Gain tools for clarifying work unit mission and developing work unit plans that align with higher-level organizational strategies. Practice writing measurable goals and determining key performance indicators to track and monitor. Learn the fundamentals of creating a budget, plus how to cost-justify requests for additional staff or equipment.

6. Rank: ____ **IMPACT STAFFING:** Learn the importance of and key steps to being prepared for conducting a selection interview. Practice developing performance-based interview questions and recognizing what is legal or illegal to ask in an interview. Understand the importance of and know how to ensure job candidates are provided a realistic job preview as part of the interviewing and selection process. Learn what leaders can do to assist with recruitment and job applicant screening in order to get the best candidates in to be interviewed.

7. Rank: ____ **EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION AND ON-THE-JOB TRAINING:** Gain tools and techniques for getting new employees off to a good start (oriented to their job and their work unit). Practice developing a structured plan for conducting On-the-Job Training and gain tools for avoiding problems that can arise with OJT. Learn to foster high performance in employees by communicating high expectations (creating a positive Pygmalion Effect).

Leadership Training and Development Survey (cont.)

8. Rank: ____ **EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND COACHING:** Learn techniques and tools for managing employee performance, beginning with an effective goal setting process. Learn the importance of observing and documenting employee performance on an on-going basis. Learn key principles for effective use of day-to-day performance feedback (both feedback to reinforce as well as correct performance). Learn how to systematically analyze performance problems, develop appropriate coaching strategies and, when necessary, how to address situations requiring progressive discipline. Learn principles for effective use of recognition and strategies for maintaining motivation/identifying and removing obstacles to performance and job satisfaction. Review steps and approaches for effectively preparing for and conducting annual employee performance reviews.

9. Rank: ____ **BUILDING EFFECTIVE TEAMS:** Through an experiential teambuilding simulation, learn the barriers to teamwork and critical success factors for teams and teamwork. Begin a real-life team building process by distributing a Team Effectiveness Survey and collecting feedback from the members of your team to better understanding how team members perceive the team is functioning (where the team is functioning well and where things could be improved). Review several tools and techniques for improving teamwork, including approaches for gaining clarity around Team Mission and Shared Goals, Roles and Responsibilities, Group Processes (including team communications, rewards and decision-making), Interpersonal Relations, and Inter-Group Relations. Take part in additional teambuilding activities and discuss their potential applications back on-the-job.

10. Rank: ____ **CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION:** Gain an understanding of the importance of fostering creativity and innovation in the workplace. Learn how to avoid stifling creativity and learn techniques and tools for fostering it. Gain ideas for creating a fun place to work and experience the value of recreation, fun, and having the opportunity to practice being creative. Review basic methods of process improvement and a sampling of creative problem solving approaches. Apply creative thinking to an amusing case study to see how out-of-the-box thinking patterns can be applied and have benefit. Learn strategies for finding time for creativity, including using a Work Value Check process aimed at identifying low-value work and inefficient work processes.

11. Rank: ____ **PROBLEM-SOLVING AND RISK-SMART DECISION-MAKING:** Learn and practice use of an established 7-step process to assist databased decision making for problem solving or process improvement. Learn the importance of effectively defining the problem or process improvement opportunity. Compare and contrast various means of collecting and displaying data to help identify the root cause of problems and identify potential solutions or process changes that will have the greatest impact on solving a problem/preventing problem recurrence and/or improving and sustaining process capability.

- ***Learn about problem solving /process improvement in the specific context of improving processes to better service customers.*** Identify means of improving internal customer service in order to improve service to external customers. Learn about the value of and how to effectively manage employee empowerment in order to achieve its benefits and minimize any risks associated.

Appendix F: Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc. Human Resources Disclaimer Letter

December 4, 2006

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

We are aware that George W. Ronnestrand is pursuing his Plan B research thesis requirement for his candidacy toward a master's degree in the Career and Technical Education program, related to this project, he has elected to survey sales leaders at Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc. a Wisconsin Corporation. We grant permission to affiliate Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc. in his efforts to collect data via an internet survey and to analyze such data, draw conclusions and complete his research thesis entitled "A Leadership and Development Needs Assessment and Course Sequencing at a Wisconsin Corporation." The information resulting from the research will provide information on the Leadership and Development needs of Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc. And additionally provide a prioritization of the course sequencing based on the needs of the sales leaders who took part in the survey and provide course sequencing to Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc. The data may be shared with others at the corporation as well as partners who may have an interest.

Disclaimer; The purpose of this disclaimer is to notify the participants of this survey process and the outcome of surveys and studies used in this investigation at Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc. will not be used in an adverse way; whereby affecting the participants job function, and/or result in the ranking of participants. This information is also being kept confidential and privileged. This disclaimer will apply to all other surveys relating to our continual improvement process at Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc. In addition: the criteria for this survey have met the guidelines set forth by the Human Resources Department at Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc.

Sincerely,

Michael Mc Donald
Executive Vice President of Sales
Jack Link's Beef Jerky, Inc.

Appendix G: Do Your Employees Value Learning?

| Item response | Managers comment |
|------------------|--|
| 1. | I believe they do. We recently participated in a team building exercise where participants were assisted in identifying their personal strength's and weaknesses and the feedback I received from the team on this learning experience was very positive. I am personally surrounded with many over-achievers who are eager to improve their own personal skill sets. |
| 2. | Yes, they want to continue to learn and grow both professionally and personally. |
| 3. | I think not only do they value learning, but they embrace it. I do not believe we have done enough as a company in the past in the form of training / teaching. Just the small amount of training we have done in the Grocery / Drug Channel since January has been very well received and we have more planned at upcoming meeting. |
| 4. | The majority of the RST places a high value on learning. We strive to impact the ARMS and RAM'S on how important it is to learn new ways to better themselves and the company. We are constantly learning new ways to overcome decreasing merchandising space within a location and pass these Better Business Practices on to the other AREAS within the RST. |
| 5. | Yes. |
| 6. | I believe they value learning highly. But the training needs to be tailored to Link Snacks and the culture of our company. People need to be able to walk away from the training and begin using the concepts. |
| 7. | We need to demonstrate that we value learning as a company (at the highest levels of the organization) if we are going to gain acceptance among those who are resistant to learning/change. I think this will be a big challenge for this Leadership team because we have not been a company that has shown a commitment to learning. Investing significant time and money into formal training will involve a cultural change |
| 8. | Yes, by all means. As a company, we need to do a better job of trying to impress upon our employees the importance of taking the initiative to learn more, and take additional training. We need to implement types of programs (tuition reimbursement?) as one way for our employees to be "incentives" as such |

9. With a heavy production culture, we need to create a learning culture to build the skills of our teams. Determining the training requirements will be different for each team and individual, potential to develop IDP Individual development plan in the future to augment the performance review process would be a very good motivation tool for JLBJ.
-

All respondents based on responses in table 2 have a positive view and are excited about offering more formalized leadership and development training at the organization. For opinion-based questions, the views of each manager may vary, but it is clear the organization is ready for more advanced leadership and development training.

Appendix H: As A Result of Development, What Outcomes Are You Trying to Achieve?

| Manager response | Managers comment |
|------------------|---|
| 1. | Trust amongst all team members. Improved communication amongst all team members. Unfiltered dialogue among team members. Accountability amongst team members. Effectively outline expectations so to ensure all team members are in sync with goals & initiatives. |
| 2. | Make them a better more educated individual which will help them grow personally and professionally. By doing this you create a happier more productive employee. |
| 3. | My goal with the Grocery / Drug personnel is to elevate them to a level of category experts. By accomplishing this, these individuals would be viewed by their customers and the trade as the “go to” person within the meat snacks category. |
| 4. | To build a more cohesive TEAM. One that can work together, trusts each other, communicates effectively the first time and can lead and direct our internal and external staff. We are looking to place the “right” people in the right management and sales positions within our company. |
| 5. | Motivated Staff, lower turnover, increased productivity. |
| 6. | Main goal would be ability to effectively work with our teams in a positive manner. Develop cross-functional teams that can communicate, develop plans, and successfully implement their goals. Be better able to evaluate success and measure goals. |
| 7. | My end result of development would be ensuring that our employees are acquiring the skills and competencies necessary for us to reach aggressive growth objectives. We also must provide people with opportunities for personal growth to enhance job satisfaction and morale. Overall, we need to view our human capital as a potential source for competitive advantage and invest accordingly. |
| 8. | We are trying to keep our employees motivated, and to have them improve their selves in as many ways as possible. A motivated employee is a satisfied, and usually above average performing individual. |

9. Free up more senior people to focus on team building and strategic focuses verses getting involved in the day to day business our direct reports should be accountable and competent to manage.
-

Several different training outcomes were identified in Table 3 by the participants in the study. Each of the topics of this survey has the potential to train personnel in an area of leadership and development that was identified by the managers who participated in this survey.

Appendix I: Where Does the “Team” Work Well?

| Manager response | Manager comment |
|------------------|---|
| 1. | The team works like a well oiled machine when there is strong collaboration among all relevant team members when identifying and targeting key initiatives as a team. Everyone is on the same page and individual accountability/expectations are publicly identified. |
| 2. | We share success stories at our management meetings and on occasion contact one another for opinions and ideas. |
| 3. | I think this team is highly motivated and knows how to sell. It is evident that there is a lot of expertise and background in each of our respective areas. I also don't believe this group has any problems executing. I think the only thing that slows this group down is communication (see below). |
| 4. | This is due to “old habits are hard to change.” Each one of the channels has room for improvement. Could they be better? Of course they could and they are always trying to do better. They have clear, concise, consistent and clean direction. |
| 5. | In a crisis |
| 6. | When all team members feel fully engaged in the process, understand the overall goals and what they are personally accountable for. |
| 7. | We do a good job of achieving results within our functions or areas of personal responsibility. These separate results usually add up to good results for the total company. |
| 8. | I am pleased to be invited to attend, and learn as much as possible, with how things are transpiring with our domestic channels. |
| 9. | Achieving business top line growth results is a big plus at JLBJ. |

The data in table 4 would indicate the managers perform well as a team when they need to deliver results. They also state a need for overall goals and to be engaged and held accountable for results.

Appendix J: Where are There Opportunities for Improvement with Regard to Teamwork?

| Manager response | Manager comment |
|------------------|--|
| 1. | The biggest area of improvement would be when expectations are not effectively communicated and when team members fail to hold one another accountable. |
| 2. | We need to develop company strategic objectives supported by all levels. Share the strategic direction and goals with everyone in the company. Change the culture of the company. It rewards for individual performance and not team. |
| 3. | Communication and trust are the biggest obstacles. First, we must do a better job as a company and management team of communicating more clearly and with ample lead time. Secondly, it is imperative for the organization (top to bottom) to trust each other. We have a very guarded approach within the organization and this filters out through the field. Trust will help open up the communication lines and should in turn enhance our overall approach. |
| 4. | You can help us become better at what we do for you please step up and give us your input along with clear, concise, current and consistent directions. As with the other Channels the RST will hire for character and train for skill. |
| 5. | Developing team from cross functional areas and making sure everyone is able to freely express themselves without feeling threatened. All teams understand their purpose and they stay focused. |
| 6. | Communication, employee development, cross functional teams |
| 7. | Developing cross functional areas and making sure everyone is able to freely express themselves without feeling threatened. Give visibility to what cross functional team exist and what their goals are. Prioritize overall company goals and develop teams to meet these goals. |
| 8. | All teams within our organization have room to improve greatly with the communication (or lack of) which does or does not take place. This is a key and major weakness. We also need to foster the idea that all departments are on the same team. "Vertical segregation" is an area we need to help all areas of the company work to correct. |

9. Every channel has delivered exceptional results verses our peer competitors, team work may focus on cross functionality, and resource deployment issues. Concentrate more on employee ROI verses empire building as an example. RM & DM teams should build better broker supervision practices to maximize broker utility. We need to maximize our commission structure, and rethink some aspects of our account structure to have clearer lines of account responsibility in particular channels.
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The data in table 5 would conclude the largest opportunity for improvement is communication and direction of the goals for the organization. Additionally, the managers indicated a desire for more cross functional sharing of best practices, and lastly, building trust and corporate alignment