Running head: PROGRAM EVALUATION FOR ELIGIBILITY ENROLLMENT

Program Evaluation for
Eligibility Enrollment Services’
Blended Learning Solution:
Needs Assessment, Purpose, and Goals
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Needs Assessment, Purpose and Goals

The purpose of training programs in public sector, small business, and corporate environments has remained the same throughout the history of business. That is, to develop, maintain, and expand the knowledge and skills of workers, in order for them to successfully perform certain tasks and duties for the organization. Historically, corporate education, and its associated learning activities had been conducted in traditional classroom settings.

As corporations grew, it was necessary to implement varying shifts, telecommuters, as well as open multi-national and international locations. It was soon found that training paradigms would have to shift to keep up with changing business needs. Traditional means of educating employees were becoming more expensive and lacked the flexibility and expansive delivery necessary to remain competitive in the marketplace. Chellman and Ducharstel (2001) declared, “Distance education is seen as an important answer to the professional development needs of large masses of the population” (p. 147).

Unicare Corporation delivers insurance eligibility and receivables management services to healthcare clients in order to resolve income issues faced by hospitals, clinics, medical teaching centers and health systems across the United States. To that end, part of Unicare’s vision is to “find, hire and retain the best people and help them achieve their full potential”.

Unicare Corporation’s training program for their Eligibility Enrollment Service line apprentices began in 1989 with one local Ohio trainer, who also designed and developed all training materials. All orientation, new hire training, and information and skill updates were conducted solely via traditional trainer-led classroom training by this person. As the business grew to incorporate other eligibility service lines with a national focus, the challenge of providing quality training increased exponentially. It was now necessary to train more people, faster, in diverse areas, both skill-wise and geographically, while keeping costs down.

In 2001, Unicare decided to incorporate online modules into the curriculum in order to offer a blended learning solution. In some cases, this alternative training delivery method would replace classroom delivery, while in other cases it would augment it. It would also ensure that everyone got information and updates, at the same time in the same manner. The goal was to expand the capability and reach of employee training, while reducing training costs, length of training, and travel expenses. Blake, Gibson, and Blackwell (2003) stated, “Traditionally, employees have had to travel to the classroom for instruction, but with Web-based learning, the classroom is only as far as your desktop or laptop” (p. 5). The idea that trainers could update their material immediately and not concern themselves with ancillary issues such as printing and distribution was an attractive one. Any employee nationwide would be able to access any changes with guaranteed standardization and without significant delay. Other positive features of incorporating online training was the thought that it would cut much of the costs associated with meeting space overhead, as well as the cost of time away from work for the employee.
While the stakeholders had a general idea of what the outcomes should be, no timeline, or plan of action was put in place other than to hire a Training Manager/Instructional Designer to design and institute the new program. In addition, no benchmarks or defined measurement of success for the blended learning solution was determined at the time, nor was a measurement administered after implementation.

The purpose of this evaluation is not to compare the two training methodologies, but to determine the costs, savings, internal benefits and disadvantages of the blended learning solution as implemented across each of the Eligibility Enrollment service lines. The following questions will be explored in an effort to determine successful practices, areas that necessitate improvement, and any that should be expanded or eliminated: (1) Has the new training paradigm/culture been accepted? (2) Has the blended learning solution decreased training time? (3) Is the time from class to production shorter? (4) Has it cut meeting space overhead and travel costs? (5) Is it more or less costly than traditional classes? (6) Are there any benefits or disadvantages realized that were not expected prior to the start of the program?

The answers to these questions will allow the stakeholders to calculate quantitatively and qualitatively their return on investment (ROI) as well as, decide what competitive benefits the program has gained the organization, if any.
References

