

...a handbook

This project was undertaken by the Centre for Workplace Learning and supported by a grant from the Department of Training and Education Co-ordination under the Industry Training Development Program

DTEC/Dusseldorp Skills Forum ©1995

## **Congratulations!**

Being chosen as trainer, mentor or coach for a trainee\* means you have been recognised as someone who has skills and knowledge valuable enough to teach a recruit to the workforce. It will provide you with opportunities to develop new skills in managing, training and motivating people.

#### What can I gain from working with a trainee?

Check the appropriate box if you have ever wanted to:

- improve your communication skills
- develop people management skills
- learn how to deal with different personalities
- learn how to encourage and motivate someone else
- □ learn how to teach others
- be more confident about your own job skills
- understand more of your job
- develop skills different to those needed in the daily routine of your job
- come up with better ways of doing things
- experience the satisfaction of helping a person learn new skills.

These are the benefits personally experienced by people who have taken on the task of teaching and assessing a trainee.

\*Throughout the workbook, the term **trainee** applies to students from secondary school work placement programs, trainees or apprentices. The words **trainer**, **mentor** or **coach** as used in this handbook apply to anyone in the workplace nominated to teach and/or assess a trainee. The words are used interchangeably to highlight the different facets of the role.

has helped me move into areas I had not considered; I have been able to expand myself.' **Retail supervisor** 'The people we choose to be mentors are those we want to train to take more of a management or leadership role.' **Branch manager** '...coaches tend to learn

- a great deal about the
- whole process of
- motivation, directing

and communicating.'

### Dugan Laird

voted as one of the top 10 trainers in the US.

## How do I get the best out of this handbook without taking too much time?

This handbook is designed to help you make the most of your time. The methods recommended have been tried by other people like yourself who have been working with trainees.

To help you manage your time more effectively, the handbook provides guidance on how to plan in advance and outlines methods for training and assessing. You will find that, as you become more experienced, you will develop ways of training which complement activities you carry out in your normal working day.

This handbook is also designed to help make the experience of working with a trainee something that is worthwhile for YOU. You may find you need to develop a new set of skills so that you can get the best from your trainee. You may even have to change the way you have previously approached some aspects of training.

Use the checklists and questions to identify skills you would like to improve. After you have been working with the trainee for a period of time use the rating form in Section Three as a tool to measure your own success and plan future goals.

You don't have to read all the information in the guide at once. Keep it handy so you can refer to it as you need to. Before the trainee starts, review the information in the Survival Kit. Then use the table of contents to locate the information most relevant to your needs.

#### Section One: Survival kit

This section contains practical information and support materials. You may wish to use the lists and blank forms provided to help you plan and conduct your training.

#### Section Two: Something for you

This section is intended to help you improve your skills in communication, teamwork, motivation and problem solving. Use the material and the opportunity of working with a trainee to become more aware of:

- yourself your strengths and weaknesses
- how well you can work with others
- how important a team spirit is in helping enhance everyone's individual performance
- possibilities for your own career development.

#### Section Three: What next?

A self-analysis chart has been included to help you reflect on your skills and think about how improving these skills will help you achieve your own career goals.

#### Section One: Sur vival Kit

- 4 What is expected of me?
- 5 What do I teach the trainee?
- 6 Do I have to assess the trainee?
- 6 What do I do to prepare for the trainee?
- 7 What happens on the first day?
- 10 How do I plan a structured program?
- 12 What is the best way to teach someone?
- 18 What is the best way to assess the trainee?
- 20 Planning forms

#### Section T wo: Something For Y ou

- How can I communicate more effectively?
- How can I help others develop to their full potential?
- How do I motivate someone else?
- 32 What if problems arise?

#### Section Thr ee: What Next?

- 35 Rate your own skills as a workplace mentor
- What next?

# Section One: Survival Kit

# trainer:

 one who makes proficient by

instruction and practice, as in some art, profession, or work

## mentor:

 wise and faithful adviser or teacher

 loyal adviser entrusted with the care and education of another



 one who gives instruction and advice

3

Random House College Dictionary

In most cases, the trainee who is with your organisation will be participating in a formal entry level training program. In some programs trainees will be receiving additional training off the job at school, TAFE or elsewhere, while in others you will be responsible for delivering all the training. Whatever the case, you play a vital role in helping the trainee progress. As a workplace trainer your responsibilities are to:

- teach the trainee
- directly supervise the trainee
- organise opportunities for the trainee to learn a range of skills
- arrange for other employees to teach skills to the trainee
- check or assess whether the trainee has mastered those skills
- liaise with the provider of any off-the-job training
- support the trainee in their learning where self-paced materials are used.

You can also do a great deal to help the trainee gain a firm footing in the workplace. Think back to when you started work. Was there someone of significance who helped get you started? Would you have liked someone to have been there to help you along the way? What kind of person were they?

More than likely, this person would not only have taught the technical skills necessary for the job but also would have:

- motivated you
- encouraged you
- provided leadership
- increased your self-esteem
- helped you think for yourself.

That is your role as a mentor.

#### Where do I start?

Speak with your employer or the person placing the trainee to find out about the program the trainee is participating in:

- How long does the program run?
- What skills is the trainee required to learn?
- Is a skill list or log book available for you to use?
- How often do you need to complete entries in the log book?
- What will the trainee be learning in their off-the-job training at school, TAFE or elsewhere?
- Are you required to formally assess the trainee's progress in achieving skills?
- Who do you contact for advice and guidance?

You teach the trainee the skills required to competently perform at their level in the workplace. These skills have been identified for many industries in consultation with employers, unions and educators. They are skills you have already mastered and which you use to perform your job competently. They include:

- technical skills
- reasoning skills
- the skills needed to adopt a positive and responsible attitude in the workplace.

Skills are listed in a number of ways, depending on the program the trainee is participating in. Commonly used publications are:

- Training Achievement Record
- Vocational Training Order
- Training Plan
- Competency Standard
- Skill List
- Log Book.

You will need a copy of the skill list appropriate to your industry and the trainee's program. The trainee should have a copy or you can obtain one from:

- your local DTEC office
- a Group Training Company in your industry
- the coordinator of the trainee's program.

Alternatively, your organisation may have developed its own list of skills or competencies to which you can refer.

One of the first things to do when the trainee arrives is to go through the skill list with the trainee and, together, plan a structured program (see page 10 for more details). Some programs require you to make a formal assessment of whether the trainee has achieved a specified level of competence. Even if you are not required to make a formal assessment of the trainee's progress, you may find it a useful exercise both for the trainee and for you. (See page 18 for more details on assessment.)

Assessments are good indicators of:

- how productive a trainee can be in your workplace
- the skills the trainee needs to master
- your own development as a trainer and mentor.

#### What do I do to prepare for the trainee?

Tick box when completed

- $\square$  Find out as much about the training program as possible.
- Obtain a copy of the list of skills the trainee needs to learn.
- □ Identify the skills which can be taught in your workplace.
- Let other staff know when the trainee will be starting and what the training program is about. You could do this at a staff meeting.
- Delegate some of the responsibilities of looking after the trainee to other staff members who can make a useful contribution.
- Negotiate with your employer to allow time for you to work with the trainee and cope with your usual duties.
- Organise work space and necessary equipment for the trainee.
- □ Find out what additional training the trainee will be receiving at school, TAFE or elsewhere. Discuss with the training provider or program coordinator how to link the training you provide in the workplace with what the trainee is learning off the job.
- Use this handbook to identify gaps in your own skills and knowledge and develop a plan for you to fill those gaps.
- Plan for the first day.

Right from the beginning, it is important that you:

- help the trainee feel part of the team
- familiarise the trainee with the business and its operations
- clarify your expectations of each other.

'I was included right from the start. I felt good when people talked to me as though I was one of them.' **Trainee in clerical skills** 

### Help the trainee feel part of the team right from

the beginning

When the trainee feels supported as part of a team it is more likely she will ask questions, raise problems and concerns and feel confident about what to do if a mistake is made.

Help the trainee feel welcomed as part of the team by:

- introducing the trainee to the people she will be working with
- appointing one person to be a permanent contact with the trainee, even if the trainee is shifted around to various sections
- allocating a physical work space close to people with whom the trainee will be working
- encouraging the trainee to ask questions and talk over issues with someone in the team
- involving the trainee in staff meetings and work-related social activities
- reinforcing the trainee's feelings of belonging and being needed and useful
- treating the trainee as an employee.

In what practical ways can you help the trainee to be part of your team?

#### Familiarise the trainee with the business

To familiarise the trainee with the operations of the business, take him on a physical tour of the department in which he works as well as other departments or sections within the business. This might include the shop front, factory floor, showroom, distribution centre, warehouse or other areas.

On the first day make a start in discussing with the trainee the items in the following checklist. You may have other ideas to add to the list. Remember not to overload the trainee with too much information at once.

### Tick when discussed with trainee

#### Work environment

- ☐ facilities where the toilets, kitchen and fire escapes are located
- how to find their way around
- procedures in case of accident.

#### The organisation

- what its mission is
- how it operates
- an overview of other departments and facilities
- where the department the trainee is assigned to fits into the overall picture.

#### **Policies and practices**

- the key policies and procedures which are followed in your workplace
- occupational health and safety in your workplace
- work ethics
- the importance of confidentiality in the workplace
- dress standards
- honesty and courtesy.

#### About the job

- □ the main features of the job
- □ if the trainee is a paid employee, employment conditions
- $\Box$  the role and function of the relevant union
- $\Box$  start, finish and break times
- procedures for reporting and recording progress.

'The best place I worked at was the one where the whole business was explained right at the start – security and everything. You need to know how what you are doing fits with the business.' Trainee in hospitality industry

#### People

- □ other staff members the trainee is likely to come in contact with
- the person with whom the trainee should discuss work-related concerns
- □ the management structure.

#### Expectations

- what you expect of the trainee
- what the trainee expects to achieve in the time spent in your department or organisation
- what the off-the-job training provider or coordinator requires by way of training and assessment.

#### Reporting

 $\Box$  who the trainee is responsible to.

#### Anything else

'No-one explained to me how what I was doing fitted in with the business. I would have been more motivated if I had known how the job I was doing related to how the business worked.' **Trainee in retail** industry

Use resource material to help you. Suggestions are:	I can use:
statement of duties	
in-house publications	
in-service manuals	
occupational health and safety instructions or videos	
promotional video of the organisation's activities	
diagram of management structure	
annual report	
publicity video of products and services	
news articles about the organisation	
other people who can explain facets of the organisation or their role.	on

#### Clarify your expectations of each other

Talk to the trainee about your expectations of him, and find out what the trainee hopes to achieve in the time spent with you. Being clear about what to expect from each other right from the start may help prevent problems arising later. The section *How can I communicate more effectively?* on page 25 contains some suggestions to assist in this process.

Working with a trainee will mean extra work for you. You need to plan well so that you can manage your work load as well as train someone else.

#### The benefits of planning a structured program

Benefits to you	Benefits to the trainee
Improving your planning skills will help you to become more effective	A well-planned program helps the trainee to:
<ul> <li>in every facet of your work.</li> <li>You can meet all your responsibilities by planning specific</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>achieve the skills necessary to be competent in the workplace</li> </ul>
periods of time to spend with the trainee and other times to complete your own work.	<ul> <li>focus on tasks which have specific outcomes</li> <li>work unsupervised</li> </ul>
Planning in advance means that you can arrange for the trainee to be with someone else or to work unsupervised during your busy periods.	achieve their own goals.
A well thought out plan will help you and the trainee stay on track	

You will find samples of planning forms at the end of this section, which you may wish to photocopy and use. The information that follows will help you complete the planning forms for use with the trainee.

#### How to plan a structured program

goes wrong.

#### Work with the trainee

on those days when everything

Discuss the log book or skill list with the trainee so you know what she is required to achieve while she is with you.

Set a schedule so that you and the trainee can get together at regular intervals and review the trainee's progress.

Plan what the trainee needs to achieve by each meeting but don't set the plan in concrete; be flexible and work with the trainee to review and adjust plans as you go along.

#### Encourage the trainee to set long-, medium- and short-term goals

We all work better and are more motivated when we have goals to aim for. Find out what the trainee's strengths and interests are and what they would like to achieve, and help them set realistic goals.

Ask them how they are going to achieve their goals and how you can assist.

While you're thinking about goals, set goals for yourself too. Section Three will help you identify the goals you can aim for as a trainer and mentor.

#### Prioritise the skills you will teach in the light of set goals

Use the log book or skill list as a base and, with the trainee, identify the skills which will assist the trainee to reach their goals. Take into account what the trainee has already mastered through part-time employment or other work experience, and what she is learning in off-the-job training at school, TAFE or elsewhere. It is also important to consider which skills you can teach in your workplace, i.e. those for which you have the required expertise and equipment. Speak to the program coordinator or training provider if there are some skills you cannot teach in your workplace.

#### Write up a program including daily priorities

Develop a plan which enables you to set aside time to spend with the trainee, and time to cope with the busy periods of the day. Negotiate times where you may have to show the trainee how to use special equipment or visit an appropriate site.

Make arrangements with other people to spend time with the trainee.

You may find it useful to use the planning form at the end of this section to write up the program. A written plan is helpful especially for referring to at those times when things go wrong or when unexpected situations arise.

#### Concentrate on teaching high priority items first

Identify the skills which the trainee will need to operate effectively in the workplace from the first day. This might include how to answer the telephone, or how to use certain equipment.

#### Start with basic skills and move on to more complex

This helps to build the trainee's confidence and ensures that unnecessary problems don't arise from having the trainee take on too much too soon.

## Schedule time in which to teach skills, time for the trainee to practise and time for the trainee to work unsupervised

All three elements are necessary for the trainee to progress. Scheduling time for all three will also enable you to meet your other commitments.

#### Involve other people in working with the trainee

This helps to free up your time, as well as helping the trainee feel part of a team. Involve people who have the skills to help the trainee achieve his goals.

## If a skill is too complex to master in one session, practise the 'salami' technique

In other words, slice it into manageable sections. Guide the trainee through each section (see page 15 for more details).

#### And remember, keep plans flexible

You will be required to teach the trainee technical skills, as well as the social skills necessary to perform well in the workplace. A good teacher, however, does more than that.

A good teacher assists the trainee to:

- analyse her own performance
- identify ways in which to improve
- solve problems
- work with others as part of a team
- pursue her own learning and development.

Above all, a good teacher listens to the trainee and adjusts their teaching strategy to suit the trainee.

#### Getting organised to teach a skill

Teaching or training just doesn't happen; you have to make it happen. Answer the following questions to develop a logical plan for teaching the required skills.

- What skill is to be taught?
- What are the steps to be completed to master the skill?
- In what order should the steps be placed?
- How long will it take to teach each step?
- What is the method for teaching?
- What tools and materials are needed?
- Can other people assist in this process?
- What is the standard for assessment?\*
- What is the best way to assess the trainee's progress?\*

\*See page 18 for more information.

Ask the trainee to also answer some of the questions. This encourages him to use his initiative and think about what he is doing. If the trainee suggests a different method of doing things, recognise his initiative and help him develop the idea. Even if it is not a workable idea, praise the trainee's initiative.

'Teaching someone is much more than just passing on information.' Office administrator

#### The learning process

Each of us has our own style of learning. Think about a learning experience which was positive for you.

What made you want to learn?

What methods helped you learn best?

What were the best qualities of the trainer who helped you learn?

What were the best locations for you to learn?

We all learn in different ways. Some people learn best when 'thrown in the deep end' with a task they think is difficult, others need time to observe what is happening and reflect on it before acting, while still others learn best in a structured learning situation. If the trainee appears uncomfortable or is not making progress, examine the suggestions contained in this section and try a different method of teaching.

Be aware of factors which may help or hinder the trainee's ability to learn. For example, English may not be the trainee's first language or she may have problems reading.

If the trainee is doing off-the-job training at TAFE, school or elsewhere, read any reports from the training provider and encourage the trainee to talk about what she is learning. This will help you link the off-the-job training with what you are teaching in the workplace. If the trainee is having problems with literacy, numeracy or the English language, contact the training provider. They may be able to assist with support, resources and ideas.

#### Make the most of one-on-one training/coaching

One-on-one training or coaching is an effective way to teach a skill. You can make the most of the situation by following a few simple rules:

- Find out what the trainee already knows, even if it's in a different field. Use that knowledge as a base on which to add new knowledge and experiences.
- Try to work as a team with you taking the lead.
- Let the trainee know what he is in for and how long he will have to practise to consolidate skills.
- Reduce the demand on the trainee's memory by using lists, posters or other visual aids.
- Remember the salami technique slice material into manageable sections.
- Teach only small amounts of information at a time. If you indulge in information overload, you finish up with a confused, frustrated trainee.
- Always explain how what you are teaching fits into the big picture:
  - start with the whole story
  - explain why the job has to be done
  - explain how the job fits into the whole picture
  - only then teach the detailed process the trainee must learn
  - state the consequences of key steps of the process.
- Allow the trainee to practise, practise, practise. Remember training is about DOING not showing.
- Pay attention to what the trainee is doing and provide appropriate guidance and feedback.
- Make comments about the trainee's performance which relate to the TASK, not the ability of the trainee.
- Be supportive and encouraging. People learn best when:
  - given incentives
  - encouraged
  - praised for their achievements.

- Check the trainee's understanding by asking questions. If the trainee shows signs of confusion
  - gently establish the problem and go over things again
  - allow the trainee time to solve the problem on her own, if this is appropriate to the situation.

or

#### Examples of effective teaching methods

The following are suggestions for teaching skills in an effective manner. Decide what most suits your trainee and what is appropriate to the skill you are teaching.

1 Show the trainee what to do by doing it yourself at normal speed, then repeating it slowly. Have the trainee repeat the process with you and then allow him to practise on his own. As the old rhyme says,

I do it normal I do it slow You do it with me And off you go.

- 2 Have the trainee try the task on her own, compare what she did with you or some other experienced person, and then think about how she would perform better next time.
- **3** Discuss with the trainee where he thinks gaps exist in his knowledge. Plan with him a specific learning project to overcome these gaps. Help the trainee identify how to move to the next stage. Does he need to:
  - practise more
  - acquire new techniques
  - use different tools
  - seek out further knowledge
  - become more confident
  - handle mistakes calmly?
- 4 Break the task into small steps You will find it much easier to teach and assess skills when you break them into the steps or key indicators required to master them.
  - Analyse the skill you are about to teach and write a list of the steps, or key indicators, involved in completing a task to the standard acceptable in your workplace.
  - Sequence the steps in order of performance.
  - Use the list to take the trainee through the process one step at a time.

The sample planning form at the back of this section shows an example of a skill broken into steps or key indicators.

Try this example. What would you list as the key indicators for "shows a positive attitude to each task"?

#### Checklist:

- $\Box$  Is enthusiastic when allocated a task
- □ Shows interest when allocated a task
- Asks questions if unsure of what to do
- Records notes as instructions are given
- Shows confidence when undertaking a task
- □ Is willing to take on further tasks
- □ Is eager to learn new tasks
- Doesn't impose problems on customers
- Doesn't slouch over counter areas.

Use the checklist to provide feedback to the trainee about how well she has done. Observe the trainee carrying out the task and check off each of the indicators. Let the trainee know which steps in the process she missed and those which she completed satisfactorily. Keep the checklist for use with future trainees.

You can involve the trainee in the process by having him watch you perform a task and then write his own list of the steps involved. Go through the list with him and correct any errors. This is very useful when you are busy and the trainee can observe without interfering in the work process.

When teaching complex skills, teach only 5 to 7 steps at one time and arrange for follow-up sessions to teach the remainder of the steps. To link follow-up sessions and ensure the trainee remembers what was taught:

- briefly outline what happens next at the end of the first session
- begin the follow-up session with a review of what was learned previously.
- 5 Use visual resources to make the session more interesting

Use:

- posters setting out operating procedures or instructions
- manuals of technical instructions
- style guides providing models of documents
- 'help' functions in software
- list of steps involved in a process
- posters showing the steps in a task
- visual aids to help trainees with poor literacy
- overhead transparencies for small group training
- posters promoting occupational health and safety or customer service or other issues.

Choose one method of teaching with which you feel comfortable.

Choose another method which is new to you but which you plan to try out with the trainee. 'You need to be taught something step by step and to do it yourself – not just watch. One day, I had to sit and watch someone enter information into the database. It was boring and I didn't learn anything.' Office skills trainee Some programs require you to assess whether the trainee can perform the task or has the required knowledge to perform the task to a competent level. Even if this is not a formal requirement of the program, you will find it a beneficial process for you and the trainee.

Providing feedback to the trainee on his assessment is an important part of the learning process. See the section on page 30 for suggestions on how to provide feedback which both motivates the trainee and assists him to improve his performance.

#### The benefits of assessing the trainee

Benefits to you	Benefits to the trainee	
You need to think through the 'indicators' demonstrating a	The trainee's achievements can be recognised.	
person has mastered a skill. This helps you to analyse what you do and ways of improving.	Gaps can be identified in the trainee's development and plans made to fill those gaps.	
You learn how to motivate another person by providing them with positive feedback.	Providing positive feedback as a result of assessment is an effective form of motivation.	
You are able to judge how successful you have been at teaching someone else.	Constructive feedback helps improve performance.	

#### What it means to be competent

Being competent means being able to complete the task or demonstrate knowledge to the standard required in your workplace. Achieving competency requires practice. To make a fair assessment, you need to know what makes the performance of a task 'competent'. The trainee also needs to know what standards of competency to achieve.

Think carefully about how you determine whether a task has been completed satisfactorily in your workplace. Ask yourself:

- What are the steps to completing the task?
- What standard is required to be met for the job to have been done satisfactorily?
- How long should it take to complete the task?

Look back to page 15, under the heading *Break the task into small steps*. You will see how helpful it is to have developed a checklist so that you can identify where the trainee is performing well and where improvement is needed.

Remember to take the trainee's experience into consideration when assessing competence. Don't expect as much from a 16-year-old secondary school student without work experience as you would from a third-year apprentice. Take into account the trainee's

- age
- work experience
- background
- time spent with you.

#### Practical methods of assessment

- Observe the trainee perform a task.
- Ask questions to assess the level of the learner's knowledge. Answers can be written or spoken. Get the trainee to prepare a list of questions to ask future trainees.
- Have the trainee demonstrate or simulate the required skill.
- Self-assessment: Ask the trainee to define what is acceptable performance for a particular task, and identify where gaps exist in her own performance.
- Assess the trainee against a written checklist.
- Play the role of, say, a customer or telephone caller with whom the trainee interacts.
- Outline a hypothetical situation and ask the trainee how they would handle it. This is useful for assessing attitudes such as honesty, discretion or confidentiality.
- Ask the trainee to watch what you are doing, analyse it and report back to you.
- Ask the trainee to write a brief report on a topic related to his work.

What methods of assessment can you use to assess the trainee you are working with?

Teach the trainee how to self-assess

To succeed you have to be willing and able to learn from your mistakes; to learn from your mistakes you need to be good at self-assessment.

Encourage the trainee to keep a record of her progress.

Discuss with the trainee:

- how well she thinks she completed a task
- where she could improve ask her for suggestions
- how well the process of teaching and assessing worked, both for you and her – that way you also get feedback on how your skills as a trainer and mentor are developing.

### Trainee's Details

Use this form, or something similar, to help you find out what you need to know about the trainee to tailor the training program to suit individual needs.

Name
Age
Part-time work experience
Involved in Workplace Learning Programs at school
Skills already mastered
Achievements/ Interests
Off-the-job training

Below is an example of how to teach and assess a skill by identifying key indicators. You may find using the blank form overleaf helpful in preparing your training. Check the log book or training record you are using for other suggestions.

Skill: Perform correct credit card procedures		When: Monday 12 March 1 pm
To be achieved by: Friday 16 March		Where: Showrcom floor
		Who: Hoor supervisor
		Resources: Credit card imprinter
The trainee will be able to:	Teaching method	Assessment method
Indicators: performed satisfactorily		
Check the expiry date $\checkmark$	Explain procedure to trainee	Ask trainee to answer questions
Tick the correct box for card type	Provide trainæ with written	about policies
Correctly position card in imprinter ${f Z}$	policies on floor limits and authorisation	Observe trainee using imprinter
Tear top carbon sheet up	Show trainee how to use	
Fill in details	imprinter	
Check written amount before customer signs $[\overline{oldsymbol{X}}]$	Explain at normal speed and	
Observe floor limit	then slowly	
Seek appropriate authorisation	Ask trainee to explain what to do	
Check warning bulletin	Have trainee practise	

Skill:		When:
To be achieved by:		Where:
		Who:
		Resources:
he trainee will e able to:	Teaching method	Assessment method
Indicators:		

# Section Two: Something for you

# The opportunity to work with the trainee will help you develop your skills in

communication

teamwork

motivation

problem solving

Improving these skills will affect all facets of your work



Communication is a two-way process: let the other person talk and listen to what they say. Use the techniques outlined below to encourage the trainee to talk about his interests and goals related to work. Listen to what he says and use the information to develop a program suited to the trainee's needs.

Active listening helps you understand the speaker, express your acceptance of their feelings and encourage the speaker to further explore their feelings and thoughts.

Practise active listening techniques by:

- stating back to the speaker what you think they have said
- stating back to the speaker what you understand their feelings to be
- asking questions to make sure you understand what is being said.

Use friendly, open body language:

- face the person squarely
- use regular eye contact
- be relaxed
- lean towards them when they are speaking
- be aware of cultural differences which may create discomfort.

Observe the tone of voice: Vocal qualities can indicate much about the feelings of the speaker. Listen to how the other person is communicating, and speak in a way that fits the message you are trying to convey. Be aware of barriers which might impede the communication process. The transition from work to school can be a stressful one and the trainee may be feeling uncomfortable in the new role. You can make the trainee feel comfortable and accepted by listening and encouraging them to ask questions and offer suggestions.

Provide positive feedback to the trainee (see page 30 for more information).

Be empathetic: Keep an open mind, and hear the speaker's meaning so you can understand what it is like for them.

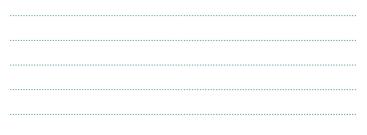
#### **Questioning Techniques**

Encourage trainees to talk about their work-related interests and experiences by asking questions in a non-threatening manner. Ask open-ended questions which require more than a 'yes' or 'no' answer. Avoid asking questions which lead the person into answering what they think you want to hear. For example, instead of asking, 'Did you do any customer service work there?' ask, 'What did you do at your part-time job?'

#### When asking questions use words such as:

why	when	who	what
where	how	summarise	justify
describe	define	explain	outline
compare	illustrate	trace	

Which communication skills do you use frequently?



Which skills could you start to use more?



While it is true that everyone must develop their own full potential, you can help someone do this. If you judge others to have more potential you are likely to

establish better rapport with them

- provide more feedback and praise
- teach more material, especially complex material

 $\Box$  encourage them to achieve more.

#### Receive and support the ideas of others

One of the best ways of helping others feel better about themselves is by receiving and supporting their ideas.

You can do this by:

- □ listening carefully and paying attention to the other person
- $\Box$  not interrupting with your own ideas
- □ acknowledging their ideas
- not putting down an idea because it's not well thought through – it may be a good idea when developed
- asking questions to help the other person explain and develop their ideas.

Are you practising these skills? Place a tick against one that you should develop.

How will you build it into your everyday practice?

.....

#### Believe in other people's potential

Believing in other people's potential means that you realise other people can improve their performance. That's what education and training is all about – to enable people to develop their potential. Our beliefs about people affect the way we treat them. That in turn affects their performance. If you develop a positive attitude to other people's potential they are more likely to achieve results.

Have you ever had someone who believed in your potential, perhaps a colleague, trainer, relative or friend? What effect did this have on you?

Consider when somebody had negative beliefs about your potential. How did this affect you?

#### Encourage them to perform well

As you know from your own experience a little encouragement goes a long way. People are often nervous and make mistakes when they are doing something new. This is particularly true for recruits to the workplace. Making mistakes, however, is how people learn to do things better. When a trainee does something wrong, concentrate first on what is done well and then give clear feedback on how improvements can be made. If you want to know how to encourage other people just put yourself in their shoes and think what would encourage you in their position.

Have you ever made a mistake and received constructive advice which has helped you improve?

#### Give them a fair go and be supportive

Giving people a fair go means giving them a chance to prove themselves, regardless of age, gender or race. If you've ever been told you can't do something when you know you can then you've experienced prejudice at first hand. Prejudice literally means pre-judging someone, that is not giving them a chance to prove themselves. In the workplace we rely on everyone to do their best. So help all those you work with by giving them a fair go and being supportive.

What kinds of support have you received at work and how did this affect you?

.....

What support can you offer to others?

Motivation comes from within but you can help motivate the trainee by creating the right atmosphere. Research has shown that people are more motivated when:

- they perceive their work to be worthwhile
- they are responsible for how their work turns out
- they are given regular feedback on whether or not they are performing satisfactorily
- there is sufficient variety in their work
- there are learning opportunities in their work
- the work environment offers support and social contact.

Encourage the trainee to set realistic goals which can be achieved. Failing to reach unattainable goals can dampen the most enthusiastic spirit.

Which of the above can you use to help motivate the trainee?

'Seek suggestions from trainees. When we asked the trainees for their suggestions we found they were really enthusiastic and wanted to participate. They came up with great ideas for helping other trainees we were taking on.' Human resources executive 'It wasn't until my last week that someone sat down with me to go

through the log book. I would have learned much more if we had discussed it right at the very beginning.' **Trainee in retail** industry

#### What if the trainee doesn't want to learn?

There may be reasons for this; among them, the trainee may have:

- literacy problems and so have little confidence
- had a bad experience with learning
- Iow self-esteem
- problems or difficulties unrelated to work.

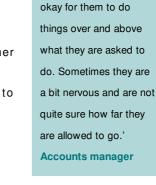
What other reasons could there be for someone appearing unmotivated?

#### How to help

You can encourage trainees to:

- work on their strong points
- realise and accept their own limitations
- establish positive relationships with other team members
- tackle smaller projects they are likely to quickly succeed in
- view their own work realistically
- praise themselves and others
- set goals they can achieve.

#### In what other ways might you be able to help?



'Talk with the trainee and

reassure them that it's



## How do I provide regular feedback that will help the trainee progress?

Feedback is an important part of the learning process. Most people perform better after receiving feedback. Feedback can be used to motivate the trainee and to improve her performance.

The aim of providing feedback is to reinforce acceptable behaviour and change unacceptable behaviour. Providing feedback in a positive way so that the trainee feels supported will encourage behaviour change; communicating in a way which makes the trainee become defensive is very likely to block any of the messages you are trying to convey.

Providing positive feedback to the trainee does not mean you cannot point out errors but it does mean that you should:

- find something in the job to praise
- confine the feedback to things the trainee can do something about
- make positive suggestions for improvement
- make valid criticisms of the person's work; don't make personal judgements about him

- avoid being destructive, demoralising or confusing
- share ideas and information rather than give advice
- explore alternative solutions with the trainee rather than providing answers
- avoid overloading the trainee with too much feedback
- make sure the time and place are appropriate to giving feedback the trainee will respond to
- avoid saying, 'you did a great job but...'. The person is more likely to remember the negative message rather than the positive. Be positive when giving praise
- ask the trainee to tell you what she thinks she has done well.

Before you provide feedback to the trainee, reflect on how you feel when praised or criticised at work. What encourages you, or otherwise? 'Listen to suggestions trainees make and commend their initiative. When the trainee suggested how to improve one of our processes, I talked it through with him. His original suggestion was not practical but from that we developed an idea which has turned out very well. I gave him the responsibility of following the idea through and he took it further than I ever thought he would.' Small business proprietor

Practise these positive methods on the trainee.

#### How can I encourage the trainees to show initiative?

Use the principles outlined in the previous sections to:

- establish two-way communication
- make the trainee feel part of the team
- encourage the trainee to ask questions and make suggestions.

Reinforce with the trainee that it is not appropriate to sit back with nothing to do. He has to learn to keep busy by:

- continually asking what to do next
- using his initiative to see what can be done
- reading any product knowledge, service or safety manuals that can add to his knowledge and skills.

Sk	ills to practise:
	Problem solving
	Conflict resolution
	Negotiation

It is far better to prevent a problem than fix it. Use two-way communication and listening skills to prevent problems growing.

Be approachable and available to the trainee.

Establish your expectations and the trainee's right from the start.

Don't be tempted to give advice or start acting like a parent, especially if the trainee is having personal problems.

When confronted with a problem, discuss it with the trainee. Ask the following questions:

- What do you think about...?
- What causes the problem?
- What might work in theory?
- What can we do?

Develop a range of solutions from which to choose. In most cases, there is more than one solution to a problem so look for solutions which meet the needs of all those involved. Choose a solution, then plan who will do what, where, and by when.

'They don't listen to instructions sometimes.'

'Sometimes they just want to talk to you about things that are happening at home or decisions they have to make which have nothing to do with work.' Mentors of trainees Most conflicts may be managed (perhaps not resolved) by using the following strategy:

- deal with emotions first
- treat the other person(s) with respect
- listen to the other's point of view
- state your own point of view assertively.

When negotiating with the trainee or anyone else for that matter, remember the following:

#### Listen to the other side

- be patient
- clarify your understanding.

#### Give your side

- be brief and to the point
- put your case in terms of their needs, not just in terms of your needs.

#### Ask questions

- to steer the negotiation
- to find out more information.

#### Be flexible

- take notes if needed
- make reasonable offers.

# Section Three: What next?

After you have been working with the trainee for a while, take some time to reflect on what you have been doing. You can improve your skills by analysing your strengths and weaknesses as a trainer and mentor.

The following checklist identifies a number of points which are the hallmarks of an effective trainer or mentor. Fill in the rating form so you can identify both your strengths and those areas which need improving to make you a more effective trainer and mentor.

#### Rate your own skills as a workplace trainer and mentor

Place a number beside each point according to the rating scale:

- 1 'I do this well'
- 2 'I do this sometimes but could do with more practice'
- 3 'I don't do this; I need to develop this skill'

Number all the items in the checklist

#### Planning:

- □ Plan the program ahead of time.
- Adjust plans if needed.
- Organise equipment and material needed for trainee.
- Ensure others in the workplace understand my role, the trainee's role and have the opportunity to be involved too.

#### Teaching and assessing:

- Explain the reasons for doing a task along with explaining how to do it.
- Allow the trainee to do things and practise instead of just watching.
- Encourage the trainee to extend herself.
- Avoid the temptation to step in and do it properly before the trainee has had a chance to complete it.
- Look out for other resources (people and things) which are of relevance to the trainee's current training needs.
- □ Coach the trainee on how to plan, analyse, self-assess, use time efficiently.
- Know when to push and when to pull back.
- Keep a record of achievement so progress can be discussed.
- Act as a role model, set an example.
- □ Vary my methods of teaching.

Let the trainee know in advance when and how he will be assessed.

- $\Box$  Assess the trainee at regular intervals.
- □ Know what is happening in the trainee's off-the-job training.
- Reinforce what is learned off-the-job with practice on the job.

#### Communication:

- Help the trainee feel part of the team by making her feel needed and useful.
- Allow the trainee to have input into the direction of tasks.
- Use two-way communication to find out what skills the trainee already has and where the gaps are.
- Praise the trainee for his achievements.
- □ Clearly explain tasks to the trainee.
- $\Box$  Ask questions to ensure the trainee understands.
- Provide the trainee with the opportunity to show initiative.
- Be supportive, encouraging and motivating.
- Build the confidence of the trainee by providing positive feedback.
- Avoid an atmosphere of criticism but be encouraging, frank and constructive.
- Listen, identify and note the trainee's strengths, help to focus her thinking to identify gaps in her own performance, and work out the best way to improve performance.
- $\Box$  Work in partnership with the trainee.

## Just as you praise the trainee for his achievements, praise yourself for what you have achieved.

If you identify areas which need improving use the information which follows to help improve your skills.

You might also find it useful to think about what your own goals are. You can then identify the skills you need to master in order to achieve your own goals.

#### What goals do you want to achieve?

Short-term

•••
Medium-term
Long-term
From the checklist identify the skills you need to develop to be a more
effective trainer and mentor and which will help you achieve your own goals:

#### How will you develop these skills?

- Use the information and activities in the handbook to identify your strengths and weaknesses. Choose those areas you have identified as needing improvement and work through the relevant sections in the handbook, taking note of the hints and guidance offered by experienced trainers.
- Discuss with your employer whether you can attend an appropriate training course. Point out that the organisation will benefit from your improved performance in all facets of your work. Find out about courses designed to improve the skills of workplace trainers and assessors. Contact the DTEC office or Group Training Company in your area.
- Form a network of mentors from within your organisation or from other workplaces. Consult with the coordinator looking after the trainee about networking with other mentors in your industry or geographical area. Mentors who have participated in this kind of networking report that they have developed their own skills by sharing the experience and knowledge of others.

#### Don't stop here ...

Which one of the above are you going to follow through on?

Who else can help you?

.....

Good luck in achieving your goals and in helping the trainee.

© Copyright Dusseldorp Skills Forum - DTEC

