On-the-Job Training: Steps to Success

Your employees are the backbone of your business. You need them to excel, and sometimes the best way to teach them the valuable skills they need to thrive is by showing them.

That’s where on-the-job training comes in. On-the-job training involves in-person demos and allows employees to gain critical hands-on experience. Paired with other forms of in-person and online training as part of a learning ecosystem, on-the-job training may be just what your organization needs.

Let’s take a closer look at how your organization can use on-the-job training to its advantage.
What is On-the-Job-Training (OJT)?

On-the-job training (OJT) allows employees to learn job-related skills by observing and performing tasks. The goal of OJT is to educate employees on how to perform their jobs safely and effectively. You may carry out an OJT program in the workplace, perhaps with the aid of specific training areas or workstations, or at an external location. You can use OJT to impart a variety of skills, from teaching call center representatives how to use new call tracking software to showing manufacturing employees how to operate a forklift safely.

In most cases, experienced co-workers administer OJT, supported by managers and human resource professionals. A third party, such as a vendor or consultant, may perform OJT instead if the training relates to a tool, software, or piece of equipment the third party specializes in.

Ideally, OJT won’t be a standalone training effort. Try incorporating it as part of a blended learning approach that uses a mix of training strategies to educate employees. Blended learning combines in-person instruction techniques like OJT with eLearning content that allows employees to learn at their own pace. It’s a great way to give your team members additional information they’ll need to perform the procedures and processes you’ve demonstrated using OJT and test their understanding of those tasks. Using a learning management system (LMS) is the easiest way to facilitate this type of blended learning environment.

To better understand how OJT works, let’s dive into a couple examples.
Take a warehouse that needs to educate its employees on how to perform tasks such as using warehouse machinery, checking inventory, and preparing parcels for shipment. A warehouse supervisor or employee who has worked at the facility for quite some time may conduct the OJT itself, and employees may also watch training videos or take online courses simultaneously. Throughout the OJT initiative, trainers may measure success by tracking metrics like how many parcels are prepared in a certain number of hours or how efficiently warehouse machinery is used.

A company that sells HVAC systems may also use OJT to help train their employees. The top sales representatives may show new representatives how to prospect, cold call, take orders, and follow up with customers. The company may set a quota for the OJT program that all participants must meet. This will inform them of whether or not the initiative was successful.
No matter what industry you’re in, you’ll find that OJT provides advantages for both employees and employers. Here are some ways employees can benefit from OJT.

**Better Retention**
Employees can read manuals and watch videos all day long, but they are far more likely to retain what they learn in the hands-on environment they’ll enjoy through OJT. Better information retention leads to better performance and competency on the job.

**Team Building**
Since OJT involves employees working closely with their co-workers and managers, it serves as a form of team building. Trainees get a thorough understanding of the type of people they’ll be working with and the culture that will surround them.

**Skill Development**
OJT allows employees to expand and enhance their knowledge and skill base. Not only does it teach them something new, it gives them the opportunity to put what they learn to use and prosper within your organization.

**Improved Engagement**
OJT provides employees with the information they need to succeed and the opportunity to learn and grow. This novelty and support will keep employees engaged and more likely to stay with the organization to employ their new skills and develop professionally.
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Reduced Accident Risk
In work environments that require physical labor, employees are less likely to get into an accident because they’ll have a solid understanding of how to operate equipment and machinery safely.

Now let’s examine some ways OJT can benefit employers.

Cost Savings
It can be pricey to send employees to conferences and training sessions. Thanks to OJT, they can learn necessary skills from their knowledgeable co-workers and managers. OJT may save you thousands upon thousands of dollars in employee training costs. It’s particularly valuable if you’re a startup or small business that can’t allocate a great deal of money toward training initiatives.

Reduced Turnover
OJT helps employees feel confident in their skills and abilities at work. They’ll be less likely to quit or get fired for failing to meet expectations. Since retaining talent is more cost-effective than hiring, this is a great perk.

Improved Culture
Your culture can make or break the experience of your employees. OJT shows that your business promotes a culture that revolves around staff development and job satisfaction, both of which employees value.

Clear Expectations
With OJT, your employees will know exactly what you expect of them. This will eliminate confusion and uncertainty while boosting productivity.

Training Gap Identification
OJT can indicate other gaps in your training program. You can use it to improve the way you onboard new employees and teach existing ones.
While you should tailor your OJT initiatives to suit your unique needs, there are a few steps every business should follow when crafting an OJT program.

1. **Assessment**

   Take the time to pinpoint what your employees must learn to perform their jobs successfully. What skills and knowledge do they need? How much time and money would you like to spend on OJT? Define the goals of your OJT program in advance to avoid unnecessary, time-consuming revamps down the line.

2. **Design**

   The design of an OJT initiative is essential. Figure out when and how you’ll run your program as well as who will be involved. You should also consider whether you’re going to rely on your internal team or hire external parties for help. You’ll want to create an outline that answers all of these questions and explains what your employees will learn. The outline should also include the form of OJT you’re planning on implementing:

   - **Job rotation**: Also known as cross training, job rotation trains employees through observation in a number of departments instead of just one. This can increase flexibility throughout your organization and allow employees to become more well-rounded.

   - **Mentorship**: Mentorship is when a senior or experienced employee uses their real-life experiences to guide new or lower level employees. A mentor has these employees’ best interests in mind and is always there to address their concerns or answer their questions. Essentially, their job is to act as a role model that employees can count on.

   - **Classroom-style**: As its name implies, classroom-style learning takes place in a classroom environment. There is a “teacher” who may be a manager, employee, or external party as well as a group of “students” who are the employees undergoing training.
3. Development
Determine what resources, methods, and literature you’ll use. Think about things like training rooms, brochures, videos, and computers that can simplify the OJT process. You may have some of these resources on hand or have to invest them. Again, incorporating techniques beyond demonstrations into your OJT program is best facilitated by using an LMS.

4. Implementation
Take everything you’ve decided upon in the assessment, design, and development phases and run with it. Bring your OJT program to life with the understanding that it’s not set in stone. You can always modify and improve it as necessary. Successful OJT initiatives are ever-evolving and always getting better.

5. Evaluation
OJT is useless unless you know whether or not it’s helping your employees. For this reason, be sure to send out surveys or ask your employees for their feedback so that you’re aware of your program’s effectiveness. Tracking and analyzing important metrics through an LMS is an excellent way to evaluate your OJT program.
Make OJT Part of Your Learning Ecosystem

For best results, OJT must be combined with other learning methods. A robust LMS like Inquisiq can facilitate this by helping you implement eLearning content like videos and courses. Inquisiq offers a great user experience for all stakeholders, robust automation and reporting capabilities, and support for blended learning. It also includes one-on-one training events and supports performance evaluations so instructors can easily monitor the learner and rate their performance, and it offers multilingual support for over 14 different languages.

Inquisiq is used by more than 500 organizations who provide training to over 3 million learners. It can meet all your eLearning needs, from compliance training to creating learning paths. Wondering whether Inquisiq can help with OJT and your overall learning ecosystem? Try it for free today.