**How to run an employee cross-training program**

by Alan See

Employee cross-training is a great way for businesses to build skill-sets while ensuring maximum coverage of key job responsibilities. With cross-training, employees are trained to in another job function, and from time to time may step in to do those duties.

While cross-training has many benefits, there are pros and cons.

To reap the benefits of cross-training, doing it right is important. A poorly managed program can result in dissatisfied customers and possibly even costly mistakes.

Cross-training is not a successful strategy for every business. But for those businesses where it seems to work, the following steps are helpful:

**1. Task identification**

Identify the tasks performed for various jobs and designate which ones could be successfully performed by other people.

**2. Voluntary participation**

Identify who is interested in participating in the program.  It may be counterproductive to force someone to participate. Decide how to deal with this situation.

**3. Cross-train**

Cross-train members of the same team.  My summer job in the West Texas oil fields during college break demonstrates how efficient teams become when they can step in to do significant pieces of one another’s work.  Also, it’s a natural learning process for one team member to pick up skills from another.

**4. Specialized skills**

Identify who has the competencies to perform the tasks designated as cross-trainable in step 1.  Specialized skills in some professionals (engineers, scientists, programmers, lawyers, accountants) may be less available for cross-training than others.  Determine what proportion of a team member’s job can be reasonably shared with other team members.

**5. Coaching**

Apply coaching skills to the process. Cross-training is at the challenging end of the learning curve, involving major portions of employees’ jobs rather than a task or two.  Those who do the training – whether it is a fellow employee or the manager – need to understand the appropriate coaching behaviors to apply at each stage in the process.

**6. Reduce workload**

Reduce workload during training and while tasks are being performed. Otherwise, the people involved may feel resentful about the process.

**7. Recognize and reward**

Recognize and reward employees that have new skills and/or responsibilities.

**8. Development plan**

Incorporate the cross-training process into an overall development plan for an employee.

Source: https://www.business.att.com/learn/tech-advice/how-to-run-an-employee-cross-training-program.html