New Employee Orientation Programs:

A Tailored Approach

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Abstract

This thesis examines the orientation or training programs employers organize for new employees and through qualitative means evaluates the plausibility of "individualized" training programs. These are the new trends in HR that have emerged during the 2010s.

The topic of employee training and orientation is well studied, yet, in practice the programs too often fail to produce the desired outcomes. One of the reasons is that they treat the workforce and the training programs as monolithic entities that leave little room for differences between employees or groups of employees. The new approaches emphasize the differences, strengths and weaknesses between individuals or groups of employees and attempt to tailor the training for them.

Using interviews and survey as data collection methods, an analysis was done to uncover people's perceptions regarding training/orientation programs and their readiness to accept the new, more focused approaches to HR management. A total of five interviews were done along with a survey that garnered 31 respondents.

The research reveals that many find the current training practices lacking in their respective organizations and remain open to the idea of customized training.

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1   INTRODUCTION

The role of intellectual and human capital has grown during the first decades of the 21st century. As a result, more attention is given to these intangible assets. Nowhere is this more evident than the way in which new recruits are introduced to a company as it can have a large impact on talent retention and overall employee satisfaction long term. Employee satisfaction in turn will have an impact on the overall success, efficiency and profitability of the business. Employers tend to look at employee orientation programs as longer-term investments expecting to see a return for their expenditure, whereas employees themselves often just want to feel welcomed into the organization. How the new employees are treated during the onboarding phase will mould their whole relationship with the organization and set the tone for future relationships.

Much has been written on the importance of the employee onboarding and training programs; the benefits they can bring, and the various challenges involved. Keeping this fact in mind, it is surprising and sobering to discover how often disgruntled workers (or ex-workers) report of inadequate or downright neglectful training practices and the complications that may follow. A failure this early in the employer-employee relationship can and often does have long-lasting deleterious effects and can unnecessarily complicate the relationship. Worse still, it may become a repetitious phenomenon, as unhappy workers act in ways that hampers the training of new employees and the cycle repeats. Furthermore, the losses that follow can be difficult to quantify, as they can be in the form of unrealized business opportunities or other opportunity costs. Afterall, how does one go about assigning monetary value or measuring something that did not take place?

Some companies, knowingly or unknowingly, forego or neglect this phase totally, opting for a "trial by fire" approach instead, leaving the workers on their own. While the literature suggests this is far from optimal, it still sometimes happens. In tightly contested markets where margins are lean, and buyers enlightened, success or failure may come down to employees' willingness to go the proverbial "extra mile" in their daily work. A workforce that is unmotivated is unlikely to do that and companies unwilling to invest into their workers may have to literally pay the price.

Traditionally, the programs, should they exist, have been monolithic entities that treat the new recruits as groups as opposed to individuals. Granted, this saves resources and are easier to implement, and the benefits are proven. However, in

contemporary markets, where business-savvy companies are vying to optimize their procedures and create value for all stakeholders, more novel approaches are beginning to emerge. These call for more attention towards the individual differences of employees and aim to tailor the training to better suit their needs. Parameters such as age, work history, wishes for the future and even personal traits may be considered and the training designed accordingly.

Initially it may seem counter intuitive to imagine providing individualised training to each employee and visualizing how this "tailored approach" might look in practice and the difficulties in implementation may seem mounting. Depending on the specifics of the organization or company this may be difficult to implement. Yet, there are several successful examples of companies engaging in these practices and enjoying the benefits in the form of more motivated workforce and better productivity.

Overall, even though this arm of HR practices is a well-studied topic with large amount of scholarly work available, there seems to exist a lot of misunderstanding about the whole premise and scope of training programs, let alone those with any degree of individualization mixed in. It may the qualitative and somewhat abstract nature of the topic that leaves room for interpretation among readers and makes it challenging to grasp, leading to confusion.

The goal was to find out what are the general perceptions of training or orientation programs overall and how they might be better tailored to either groups or individuals. The nature and types of motivation itself are examined, as are the ways in which they can be either encouraged or diminished.

Originally envisioned as a full case-study, the research turned into general enquiry into people's sentiments and readiness to accept these ideas. The fact that a proper case study could not be done serves as the main limiting factor to validity. The data was collected from survey and in total five interviews and nature of research was generally qualitative.

Main research questions:

What are people's perceptions of the orientation processes overall?

Are orientation programs able to take individual differences better into account?

Sub-question:

What are the main factors that either lead to success or failure of the programs?

2 CUSTOMIZED TRAINING

Properly done orientation programs stand to benefit both parties alike and often set the tone for overall relationship between them (Arthur 2006). Too often, employee orientation programs fall short of their goals and leave new employees feeling confused and may send the wrong message, possibly unnecessarily straining the relationship for a long time (Wallace 2009, 168).

The intensity and length of orientation on programs can also be a source of issues. Wallace (2009, 169) writes that there is no universally agreed upon length for a proper orientation period, requiring continued monitoring and periodic checks by the employer. However, if the process gets drawn out for too long, the new employee may feel like they are perpetually relegated to a 'green' status and not a fully functioning member of the organization.

Employers may struggle when trying to find the right balance when designing these programs, and many new employees face difficulties in the first weeks and months of their careers. Developing an orientation and training program that fulfils all the requirements is demanding and necessitates careful attention of supervisors (Latham 2007).

Over the last decade, new approaches have been starting to surface. These approaches attempt to take the individual differences of employees into account instead of treating the workforce as a single entity, as is oftentimes the case. Cantrell and Smith (2010) call this a "workforce of one", and in their view, it is the direction that HR practices will and should develop in the future. In their book *The workforce of one*, they go as far as calling it the creation of a customized work experience.

As competition for customers is forcing contemporary companies to become more adept at providing their customers customizable services and products, and the authors claim that customized talent management practices are the natural extension of this development (Cantrell and Smith 2010).
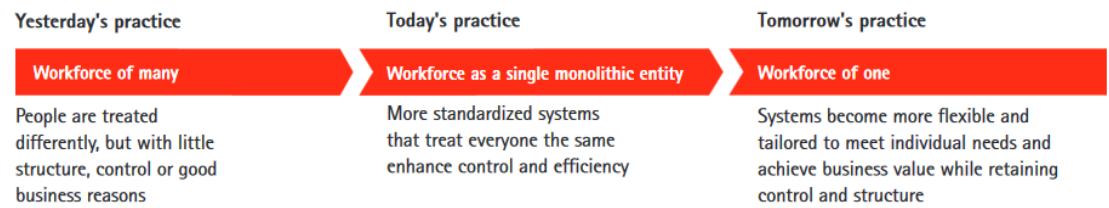
Figure 1: Evolution of HR practices as envisioned by Cantrell and Smith (2010)

This new approach to HR practices is cited as not just a way to create more value for stakeholders, but rather an imperative for staying competitive, as shifting employee demographics and increased diversity necessitate development of more tailored solutions (Cantrell and Smith 2010).
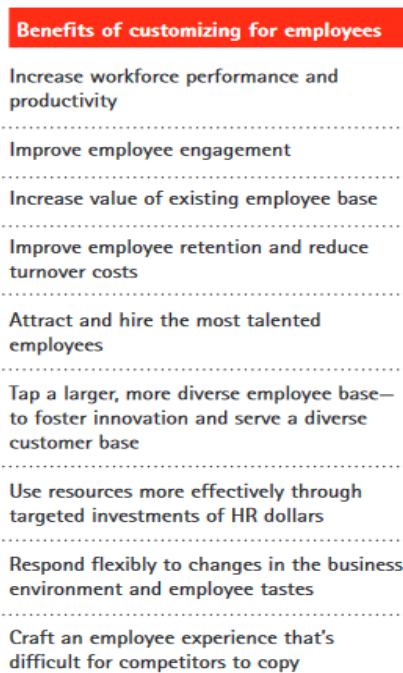
Figure 2: Benefits of "workforce of one" (Cantrell and Smith 2010)

Even though the word "individualized" gets mentioned often, the authors admit that going down to that level may be a challenging task and this does not have to be the goal for customization (Cantrell and Smith 2010).

They admit that while they have not identified any companies that offer totally customized choices to their workforce, there are several examples of organizations

that are ahead of others in their customization efforts (Cantrell and smith 2010.)

What they offer instead is something called segmentation, where employees are separated into groups based on different criteria. The deciding factor can be for instance age, specialization or their personal wishes. Segmentation is described as a useful tool that, while not completely treating the workforce as individuals, still gives the organization an opportunity to develop their capabilities to offer employees customized choices (Cantrell and Smith 2010).

Another building block, in their view, are modular choices. Employees are given the chance for instance to choose from different compensation schemes or they get to decide when and how they do their training. A classic example is the choice between doing contact training at the workplace or doing the courses distantly online (Cantrell and Smith 2010).

There are some hurdles that need to be overcome before customization efforts can be put in to action. Most pressing are the maturity of the organization and the resources available for the effort (Cantrell and Smith 2010).

There is some correlation between the maturity of the organization and the resources it has at its disposal to invest into developing its training procedures. Any kind of customization effort is likely an exercise in frustration in nascent organizations that have yet to develop their processes and training practices. Furthermore, undeveloped organizations may lack the capabilities to track the performance of their training efforts in a meaningful way (Cantrell and Smith 2010).

On Figure 3, organizational maturity levels are ranked on a scale of one to five and on four different axes' (people, process, technology, measurement). On this scale, organizations that rank level three or higher stand the best change of successfully implementing and benefiting from training customization efforts.

Organizations lacking in resources available for training may find it challenging to allocate the necessary resources on adequately long timeframes for training purposes.

Table 1: Organizational maturity levels as per Microsoft organizational readiness white paper (SLAC 2018)

Organizational Maturity Levels

	Level 1 Performed	Level 2 Managed	Level 3 Established	Level 4 Predictable	Level 5 Optimizing
People	Success depends on individual heroics. "Firefighting is a way of life." Relationships between disciplines are uncoordinated, perhaps even adversarial.	Success depends on individuals and management system supports. Commitments are understood and managed. People are trained.	Project groups work together, perhaps as an integrated product team. Training is planned and provided according to roles.	A strong sense of teamwork exists within each project.	A strong sense of teamwork exists across the organization. Everyone is involved in process improvement.
Process	Few stable processes exist or are used.	Documented and stable estimating, planning, and commitment processes are at the project level.	Integrated management and engineering processes are used across the organization.	Processes are quantitatively understood and stabilized.	Processes are continuously and systematically improved.
Technology	The introduction of new technology is risky.	Technology supports established, stable activities.	New technologies are evaluated on a qualitative basis.	New technologies are evaluated on a quantitative basis.	New technologies are proactively pursued and deployed.
Measurement	Data collection and analysis are ad hoc.	Planning and management data is used by individual projects.	Data is collected and used in all defined processes. Data is systematically shared across projects.	Data definition and collection are standardized across the organization Data is used to understand the process qualitatively and stabilize it.	Data is used to evaluate and select process improvements.

3 VIEWPOINTS ON TRAINING AND MOTIVATION

Wallace (2009) writes about the importance of new employee orientation programs and describes it as a systematic process as opposed to just a single event and that there is no universally agreed upon length for orientation programs. These sentiments are also echoed by Arthur (2009) and Rohan & Madhumita (2012.) Moreover, all authors mention the timing and pacing of orientation programs, stating that a balance should be struck between too little information and overloading with information. A so-called 'information dump' condition should be avoided.

Olubukunola (2015) conducted a questionnaire-style research in a Nigerian company in order to uncover the employee's sentiments about the effect training programs have on organizational efficiency. The results were very clear; a large majority feels that training programs have large impact on employee motivation and commitment towards the organization. Employee retention was also mentioned as a large factor, also having a large effect on the overall efficiency of the organization. Noteworthy is the fact that support for training programs remained strong even among more senior employees who were nearing the end of their careers. The study concluded that the company ought to always train their employees to secure employee commitment and mitigate professional errors.

Whereas Olubukunola studied training programs in general, Lahti (2018) focused more on the orientation programs, especially as they pertain to new employees. The study concludes that there is a benefit in having a clearly structured orientation program in place. The author made a recommendation on naming some personnel as trainers, who would handle the orienting and training of new employees.

Lahti mentions the added benefit of the people responsible for training becoming somewhat of professional trainers in the process and this is seen as a plus also for the employees themselves. Furthermore, on a more passing note, the author concluded that the training material should be developed to a degree where the new employee can also engage in self-studying in addition to receiving training at the workplace (Lahti 2018).

There are issues pertaining to workplace motivation and organizational efficiency that may not be readily measurable, or it is difficult to attach a monetary value to them and they are not traditionally recorded in accounting practices. These are

issues that may show up if training practices are inadequate or lacking and can induce drag on organizational efficiency by the way of opportunity costs.

Phillips (2003, 236-237) calls them "intangible measures" and highlights their importance in the success of an organization. Phillips states that intangible measures are sometimes overlooked since they may not be readily convertible to figures, monetary or otherwise. According to Phillips (2003), the most relevant intangible measures include things like:

- Complaints
- Grievances
- Employee turnover
- Absenteeism
- Leadership
- Image
- Teamwork, cooperation, conflict
- Creativity
- Communication

Some of them can be tracked, for instance number of complaints or employee absenteeism, but converting them to credible monetary values for accounting purposes is still challenging (Phillips 2003).

Elnaga and Imran (2013) talk about the importance of proper training procedures and their impact on employee productivity and engagement. They also talk about the effect on employee turnover and talent retention. Rohan & Madhumita (2012) also write about productivity and define it as producing results that are beneficial for the company, or output. Engagement means the commitment of employees to work towards a common goal and put forth their best effort.

To provide a framework on how to better motivate employees through training programs, understanding the nature of motivation itself is crucial. Reeve (2009) writes in detail about motivational science itself, in jest describing it as more than just quotes from famous sports coaches, however encouraging they may be. Instead, he describes motivational science as the process of constructing theories on the human motivational process works.

He poses two main questions; *why are we motivated to engage in given behaviour and why does our behaviour vary in intensity?* He admits that answering these

questions conclusively is difficult due to the large number of variables involved; he points towards several theories that can be turned to for answers. Among these theories is the self-determination theory examined in this thesis (Reeve 2009).

Reeve (2009) also talks about the approach and avoidance tendencies in motivation, noting that while generally a motivated state is a desirable state for people to have, some states are aversive and less desirable in nature. States such as fear or frustration are motivational but in the sense that the subject is prompted into actions that prevent the continuation of these unwelcome states of being. In his view, understanding the both the approach and avoidance tendencies is important when trying to fully understand the nature of motivation.

Like Reeve (2009), Ryan and Deci (2000, 69-74) have written about the nature of motivation, and note that it can be the result of the subject valuing an activity or because they are coerced into the activity externally. They note that people motivated intrinsically, as opposed to external coercion, consistently rank higher in performance, persistence, creativity and general wellbeing. This holds true even when subjects have equal amount of competence or efficacy for the task. Yet, the prevailing circumstance has a large impact both for promoting or curtailing intrinsic motivation.

While they proclaim intrinsic motivation to be an important type of motivation, it is not the only type of motivation that people experience and they acknowledge that the opportunities to engage in solely intrinsically motivated actions are gradually limited after childhood. As purely external, even coerced motivation has been proven to be inefficient and unsustainable over the long term, the authors explore ways to induce internal and autonomous regulation for actions that are externally motivated. They identify three different dimensions that impact the internal motivations of individuals; autonomy, competence and relatedness. These dimensions form the basis of the self-determination theory and all of them are essential for integrating external and internal motivation, leading to the namesake "self-determined" actions. They provide an example of a student who learns through genuine curiosity and another student whose motivation to learn is coerced through deadlines. Unsurprisingly, the students who learns with their own volition and curiosity, outclass their peers when tested (Reeve 2009).

The experience of *Autonomy* helps the subject to internalize the goals and in essence "own" them. Without excessive outside pressure, people can thus more

easily transform external goals into their own. The feeling *Competence* pertaining to a task is important as it promotes a sense of being in control. A complete mastery of the task is not required, if the subject has a feeling that the task is within their capabilities (Ryan and Deci 2000).

Relatedness is an important part of facilitating integration of external and internal motivation. Since externally motivated task may not be interesting or rewarding for the individual, the effect of the surroundings takes on a larger role. If the actions are encouraged or valued by others who the subject feels or wishes to feel connected or related, they are more likely to feel motivated to perform the task. In this instance the motivation comes not from the completion of the task itself, but the feeling of relatedness it promotes (Ryan and Deci 2000).

The three factors that the theory consists are visualised here:

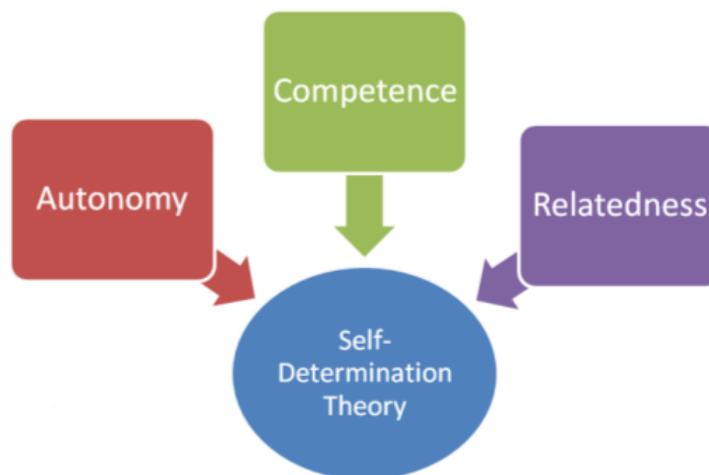Figure 3: The three dimensions of self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000)

Work engagement, a concept first appearing during the 1990s, is another term used to operationalise the different factors of employee motivation (Schaufeli 2012).

In the light of the above literature review, the following propositions can be made:

Adequate, systematic and, at least to a degree, individualized support from employer's side throughout the early stages of employment encourages employees to become intrinsically motivated, leading to measurable and sustained increases in employee productivity and general wellbeing.

If an organization can provide their employees individualised experiences through choice, the employees will become more content and productive as a result.

4 EMPLOYEE TRAINING PROGRAMS

The objectives of this research are two-fold. First, through interviews and discussions identify problem areas in orientation programs and attempt to uncover the respondent's sentiments regarding the quality of training they have received. Second, to investigate the possibility of tailoring employee orientation programs to better suit the individuals needs of new recruits. On the second objective, especially the work of Cantrell & Smith (2010), Reeve (2009); Ryan & Deci (2000) become important, as the former deals with the case of individualized training programs and their feasibility and the latter two with ways to promote motivation and self-determinated actions among individuals.

The studies done prior have identified certain patterns, namely that the support they received tended to taper off too quickly and sometimes abruptly and left them feeling abandoned with workloads they could not yet handle. On the other hand, some may feel that they are never allowed to perform autonomously enough and feel relegated to "newcomer" status indefinitely. Both phenomena seem to happen surprisingly often, especially in smaller organizations (Latham 2007).

The underlying reasons for this remain uncovered. Additionally, the surveys only identified problems from the employee side. The reasons for the perceived cessation of support from senior employee's side remains unanswered as this aspect has not been studied.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

There is one main research question that will be answered with the help of supporting sub-questions. The research questions are summarised as:

- What are people's perceptions of the orientation processes overall?
    - What are the main factors that either lead to success or failure of the programs?

- Are orientation programs able to take individual differences better into account?

It is possible that the research does not uncover any dissatisfaction among recruits, given that the previous surveys were completed by a different group and there might have been as-of-yet unknown factors at play. Therefore, there is a secondary research question that deals with the overall perception of the process, especially as it pertains to employee productivity. Thus, the research ought to produce valid and actionable results, even notwithstanding the primary question.

RESEARCH METHODS

The empirical part of this research consists mostly of qualitative methods as opposed to quantitative. However, one quantitative survey will still be implemented to support the research. As can be somewhat crudely inferred from the names of these methods, qualitative methods deal with the 'qualities' (how? why?) whereas quantitative methods with 'quantities' (how many? how much?). In quantitative approach, the conclusions are drawn based on quantification of information with the help of statistics and numerical data. In this approach, the different factors are operationalized into numerical data and statistics that are then analysed, and conclusions drawn from them. This is in stark contrast to qualitative methods, where a somewhat unstructured form of data is gathered (Hammersley, 2013).

In fact, the whole process can be described as more flexible and inductive. This unstructured information can be in the form of interviews or observations, where the data is not nearly as readily digestible, as is the case with surveys or especially interviews. It can be said that qualitative methods attempt to discover the meaning behind observed phenomena. Qualitative methods fit the nature of this research well, as a deeper understanding on *why* the interview participants feel the way they do is vital to provide valid results.

The term *soft data* is sometimes used when describing qualitative research. Soft data, as opposed to hard data is more difficult to quantify in a meaningful way. Phillips (2003, 237) presents the following table to illustrate the difference:

Table 2: Comparison of hard data to soft data (Phillips 2003)

Hard data	Soft data
Objectively based	Subjectively based
Easy to measure and quantify	Difficult to measure and quantify directly
Relatively easy to assign monetary values	Difficult to assign monetary values
Common measures of performance	Less credible as a measure of performance
Credible among management	Usually behaviourally oriented

Factors pertaining to this study (employee satisfaction or the success of a training program, success of segmented or individual training) tend to fall under the label of soft data. This is especially true when it comes to data gathered through interviews, as it is by nature abstract and more challenging to grasp.

The whole research process can be characterised as inductive as opposed to deductive. In inductive reasoning, hypotheses that lead to theories are built upon patterns that have been seen emerging through observations. Inductive reasoning, as opposed to deductive reasoning, starts by making observations that lead to forming of a hypothesis.

Inductive reasoning is well suited to research of this kind, as the problems it attempts to solve can be rather abstract and are multi-faceted. Here, induction can be resourceful, as it allows to first identify the common denominators and then build

Figure 4: The basic inductive reasoning process

DATA COLLECTION

The main data is collected through a set of interviews and an online survey. Initially, a survey will be constructed using the webropol platform and spread online. The aim is to gain as many respondents as possible with varying backgrounds to get rich data. It is essential to gather data from people with varying backgrounds when it comes to things like age, education, position in their respective organizations and work history.

In addition to survey building, this web-based platform provides the tools required to analyse the data on a basic level. Still, even with the limitations of the tool, the results can give valuable and actionable information for the interviews. The survey is done to gain a rudimentary understanding of the most relevant issues and highlight the areas that need to be explored more deeply in the interviews. It is done to gain an overview of the topic and get and understanding of the general sentiments respondents have.

The method of case study will be expanded upon here. A properly done case study has the potential to give deep understanding of a particular situation and is well suited for example in cases where companies are looking for solutions to existing problems. A clear understanding of the surroundings and the problem is vital before making any recommendations and the various methods utilized in case studies gives the researcher plenty of material to work with. Moreover, as many companies need solutions that can be applied into real-world situations as opposed to just being theoretical recommendations, a case study lets the persons doing the research test theoretical models in real situations (Shuttleworth, 2015).

Hammersley (2013) writes that for some, case studies used to be the preferred method for uncovering causal relations. This thinking has since fallen by the wayside, but the fact remains that the methods used in case studies can reveal sometimes surprising information about causal relations in organizations, for example. The term grounded theory is sometimes connected to case studies. It is a research approach where theory emerges during and after data collection and analysis (Scott, 2009). A case study does not necessarily have to use the grounded theory approach, but in some cases, it is a good option.

Beuving & Fries (2015) give an example of this kind of research where social relations in organizations were studied:

Based on literature available on the topic, a set of ideas and expectations were formulated. Then the researcher embedded himself within the organization and performed observations in naturalistic fashion. Finally, a series of individual and group interviews were held with members of said organization. Throughout this process, a theory began to emerge as some of the ideas acquired before commencement of the study were enforced and others shattered. New unexpected data may also be acquired and considered when formulating the theory. The process is systematic, yet could be described as flexible, as it does not rely on a rigid structure or hypothesis testing and the theory forms 'naturally' as the study advances (Beuving and Fries, 2015).

A case study can use a wide variety of different methods to gain adequate and holistic understanding of the problem and it is not bound to any specific method. In addition to interviews and direct observations, methods for data collection can include surveys and documentation reviews.

LIMITATIONS

As this study revolves around just one group of people, this constrains the sample size and cannot consider all the variables, known or unknown, in employee backgrounds. The study does not consider in depth the cultural backgrounds of participants for example. The cultural backgrounds of participants and its effect on their expectations is an area where further research should be made. Cultural factors are a significant variable, having a large impact on people's expectations and wishes. There may also be some unknown variables affecting the results that this study cannot consider.

The research relies heavily on self-reported data from respondents, making it difficult to independently verify. In other words, everything must be taken at face-value and possible biases may be difficult to identify. This could be overcome by performing similar study with a different batch of participants and comparing the results. The limited sample size of the group may not be a proper representation of the larger populations, thus diminishing the validity of results somewhat. Again, similar research should be done at later time to cross-check and verify the results.

Time constrains also create some limitations. Given that the timeframe for this research is limited, it presents some longnitudal limitations that may negatively affect validity. To bolster the results, this study might be done repeatedly either with different group of respondents, or the same group later to see if sentiments have developed.

There are many different factors affecting the results and at best the study can only focus on a handful of them, necessitating continued research for more coherent results.

Regardless of the results, it may be surmised that they may not be ready to be implemented as such. Thus, feasibility study might be done on a case study basis to find ways to implement changes in organizations.

TRAINING PROGRAMS

The available literature and scholarly articles suggest that new employee training can greatly enhance a company's prospects of keeping their workforce content and the organization operating efficiently. There is much less data available on the concept of individualised or segmented workforce training.

The work of Cantrell and Smith (2010) provides a framework for examining the possibilities for companies to expand their training programs to include the individual.

There are several factors that can be thought of as relevant:

Age

Age is perhaps the most readily and immediately distinguishable thing that sets employees apart from one another. It carries with it strong perceptions and expectations about the person and their standing in the organisation. Different age groups may have varying expectations towards their organization and this is something where customising the work experience around segmenting is most readily available. Segmenting employees based on age is a straightforward process for HR. Once groups of employees have been identified, different choices can be offered to different segments. An example of this might be offering distinct compensation packages to people from different segments. For instance, people from older age groups may not find the idea of monetary compensation so appealing, opting instead to receive some other forms of benefits or more time off. Younger segments in turn may find the idea of higher monetary compensation an effective way to reward employees (Cantrell and Smith 2010).

By cultivating an age-diverse workforce, companies can reap economic benefits (Parry and Tyson 2011). These can range from having better capacity to market for different segments of society to enhancing company brand and values. Growing age diversity in the workplace is the trend and a fact in the 21st century workplace, as populations are getting older overall in the western world. Thus, companies that prepare for this eventuality well in advance put themselves at an advantage, since everyone has to follow suit sooner or later.

Parry and Tyson (2011) attribute the relative lack of training and development older employees receive to perceptions generally attached to older employees. These include the belief that older workers are less agile mentally and less willing to receive new information.

Other reasons are that management may view older employees as less likely to give them return on their investment due to looming retirement. This point is at least partially counteracted by the rising retirement ages across EU and the western world in general; using Finland as an example, for someone born in the late 1980s, the planned retirement age is around 70. Thus, the same employee in their late 50s is projected to remain in working life for more than decade (Parry and Tyson 2011).

Experience

The experience level of the individual is a significant factor as more experienced people may not need as much training. However, it does not mean that training should be overlooked. For customized training, together with age, it is one of the major components.

Expectations

Expectations and how they are met have large influence on the motivation of the person. Creating too high expectations should be avoided and expectations should be managed.

Motivation

To help answer the central research questions, it is important to think about the nature of motivation itself and what motivates employees. As a field of study, motivational science is quite a contemporary phenomenon, first textbooks on the topic being published as recently as 1964 (Reeve 2009). The concept of workplace motivation is newer yet, really entering the lexicon in late 20th century.

As a concept it can be rather abstract and as a result challenging to quantify or operationalize. There are two main categories that human motivations fall under; intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic and extrinsic types of motivation are qualitatively very different, yet they are not mutually exclusive and can coexist at the same time (Reeve 2009).

Intrinsic motivation

The goal of any training or orientation program really should be to promote *intrinsic motivation* among the subjects. Reeve (2009, 112-113) describes it as a natural form of motivation that emerges out of peoples need for autonomy, relatedness and competence. When a person is in an intrinsically motivated state, it brings with it two benefits: persistence and creativity, both of which are highly desirable qualities in any employee.

Intrinsically motivated individuals are more likely to be more persistent on completing a given task despite possible setbacks. Furthermore, they can be more

creative in their endeavours, finding ways to complete tasks differently or more efficiently. However, Reeve (2009, 113) points out that creativity can be diminished if the subjects feel like they are being controlled or watched too closely.

Intrinsically motivated individuals are more likely to make statements such as *"I feel energized"* or "*I look forward to each new day*" (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Intrinsic goal pursuing is also associated with higher reported levels of self-actualization and higher self-esteem upon the completion of tasks (Reeve 2009).

Extrinsic motivation

Extrinsic motivation arises from incentives or consequences and outcomes. It is in clear contrast to intrinsic motivation since the motivators are external. The list of possible external motivators is endless and depending on the person and the specifics of the situation. Possible motivators, as listed by Reeve (2009) can be:

- Salaries, benefits, credits, certificates, trophies and awards
- Attention, praise, privileges, recognition, impressing peers, promotion
- Meeting quotas, reaching higher grade, meeting deadlines

External motivation can be simplified as "do this in order to get X", or "do this to avoid getting X". Instead of pursuing a goal for the internal satisfaction it brings, external motivation comes from a given consequence, usually something that is separate from the action itself (Reeve 2009).

External motivation may not necessarily carry with it the persistence and creativity aspects as intrinsic motivation does and tends to taper off once the set goals are reached.

The introduction of external rewards to an individual in an intrinsically motivated state may have the unintended consequence of undermining the internally driven motivation. This seems counterintuitive, since one would expect an individual in an intrinsically motivated state to reach some kind of "super-motivated" state once external incentives are introduced. This is because the act of introducing an outcome, be it desirable or not, shifts the subjects focus from optimally challenging themselves into reaching or avoiding the outcome. Reeve (2009) calls these "the hidden costs of rewards".

Obviously, at a workplace setting, external rewards have an integral part in motivating the employees and sometimes are the sole motivator, yet, the work by Reeve (2009) literature suggest that there might be other ways organizations can utilize to enhance their workforce's morale and motivation

5   EMPIRICAL PART

Survey

See the survey results on appendix 1.

The sample in total was quite young, with little work experience and from interning or entry-level positions. This can be seen from the mean (1.74) and standard deviation (1.12) figures for age. This is not surprising, as the survey was proliferated among university students mostly. This correlates with the average work experience and rank in the organization, with means of 1.79 and 0,91 respectively. Furthermore, most respondents (67%) were female. Total sample was size N=31.

No respondents reported working in the upper echelons of their respective organizations, with none having experience from upper- or middle management positions. Majority of respondents had gained their experience in medium or large organizations, with these categories receiving half of all total responses.

On the question on general perceptions of investing in and implementing training/orientation programs, the majority was for them with a mean of 4.06, indicating a strong support.

6. I think that employers ought to invest in employee training/orientation programs

Vastaajien määrä: 31

	1	2	3	4	5		Yhteensä	Keskiarvo
Strongly disagree	1	1	6	10	13	Strongly agree	31	4,06

7. I have taken part in training/orientation programs set up by my employer

Vastaajien määrä: 31

	1	2	3	4	5		Yhteensä	Keskiarvo
Strongly disagree	4	5	7	5	10	Strongly agree	31	3,39

On the next question on personal experience of training programs, the answers are less conclusive. The median of 3 shows that not nearly every respondent had taken part in training programs set up by their employers. There is a significant positive correlation with the size of the organization, with people from larger companies reporting partaking in training programs with greater frequency. This is

unsurprising, as more mature organizations (level 3 and up on SPICE scale) have the processes and resources to invest into training programs

On the question on encountering problems in their work because of inadequate training practices, be it real or perceived, the answers are quite ambiguous. There is some bias towards agreeing with the statement.

On Question nine the answers are clearly concentrated below the 50th percentile. This indicates that a significant portion reported that their personal traits were not being considered during the training programs. Only one out of 31 strongly agreed with the statement. This is in stark contrast to the follow-up Question of whether it is important that individual traits are considered in training programs, where the answers concentrated clearly above the 50th percentile.

9. My personal traits and wishes were taken into account during the training/orientation program

Vastaajien määrä: 31

	1	2	3	4	5		Yhteensä	Keskiarvo
Strongly disagree	4	6	11	9	1	Strongly agree	31	2,9

On Question 11, respondents seem to mostly agree with the statement that is difficult for companies to tailor their training or orientation programs for individuals.

Questions 12 and 13 gathered responses that were skewed towards agreeing, with means of 3,97 and 4,23 respectively. The results repeat on Question 15, where there is a bias towards agreeing. However, question 14 reveals that despite the preference for individualized options preference, it has often not materialized. Answers on Question 15 are concentrated below 30th percentile with a mean of 2,58. This is indicating that despite the general sentiments of training programs missing the mark on individualized options, they still produce adequate results.

14. I have been offered paths and choices by my organization that best suits my individual strenghts and aspirations

Vastaajien määrä: 31

	1	2	3	4	5		Yhteensä	Keskiarvo
Strongly disagree	6	11	6	4	4	Strongly agree	31	2,65

15. I would prefer to choose from different options as incentives or compensation for overtime. For instance i could choose between monetary / time off / benefits / work from home

Vastaajien määrä: 31

	1	2	3	4	5		Yhteensä	Keskiarvo
Strongly disagree	1	2	5	9	14	Strongly agree	31	4,06

When considering the companies willingness to develop their training programs to better match the individual needs of their people, or indeed even implement said programs, the size of the organization itself seems to be the most significant predictor. People from large and large organizations consistently reported both on participating in training programs and encountering less workplace problems that happened due to inadequate or incomplete training.

The reverse seems to be true for micro companies, where almost none reported taking part in training programs. People from larger companies also seem to possess a higher confidence in the training programs' ability to produce favourable outcomes. Furthermore, this group shows more preference to both individual learning paths and individualized compensation plans.

Gender has some impact on the results. Specifically, females are less likely to have taken part in training programs. They generally seem to have a more favourable opinion on training programs.

Interview results

See the list of interview questions on appenix 2.

To answer the research questions adequately, a set of qualitative interviews was conducted in order supplement the more quantitative results of the survey. A total of five interviews were done during the autumn season of 2018.

The interviews are where the main portion of the data was collected, the preliminary survey acting as supporting document from which the main questions for the interview were compiled. All the interviews followed the same format; seven questions were presented and the conversation was recorded and later reviewed and transcribed. The interviews were all between 10 to 20 minutes long. Interviewees were between 22 and 60 years of age and from varied backgrounds. Of the five interviews that were done, three happened in English and one in Finnish.

When conducting interviews for research purposes, it is important they are done in a distraction-fee setting and the terms confidentiality are made clear before the interview starts. This is done to create a secure environment for the interviewees and to avoid creating too "clinical" setting as this might affect the results.

The interviewees were explained the purpose of this research the format that It would follow. Going into the interviews, the initial idea was to follow a strict and linear question-answer pattern. In hindsight, this thinking was flawed as the interviews turned out to be somewhat of a hybrid between standardised and free-flowing discussion by necessity, as some of the subjects needed clarification or examples on some of the questions. This may have been because the questions were unclear, or they were presented in a manner that was confusing. Still, this more free-flowing form seemed to suit the situation well and got the interviewees to explain their positions or thinking in more detail, which in turn gave answers that were easier to work with.

Some of the questions were completely open-ended (*What does orientation or training bring to your mind in general? Do you have something to add to this theme?*). These types of questions proved to be valuable additions, as they prompted the interviewees to discuss themes or ideas that were not even considered by the researcher during the planning phase and it gave rise to some new ideas.

During the actual interview, the researched maintained a neutral demeanour, not counting the encouraging of responses through nods and short vocalizations ("yes", "I see" etc.). The importance of these became quite clear during the process, as they seemed to support and give more confidence to the interviewees, encouraging them to explain their positions in more detail or support them with examples.

The neutrality of the interview was highlighted as was the fact that there are no right or wrong answers, of which some seemed to be worried about initially. The subjects were people that were known to the researcher before and this helped in creating the rather casual tone and flow of the interviews.

The interviews revealed almost universal support for all kinds of orientation programs set up by employers. Other point that repeatedly came up at this point was the failure of employees to direct enough resources for the training of new employees. These two things kept appearing in all the interviews; that they are very important yet often fail.

> *"Absolutely, I think that companies could reap great benefits from customized training."*

> *"Time-wise, the training of employees is generally very much lacking in my experience."*

The only exception were cases where the person already holds considerable experience in their field and is for instance switching companies; in this situation the person thought that a more streamlined process for training suffices.

> *"I think experience is the biggest factor that sets employees apart from eachother and this should be considered during training."*

The reasons for the perceived (or actual) failures were numerous: not enough time invested into training, expectations not expressed at all or inadequately, no follow-ups, lacking or outright non-existent communication. Two out of five reported being in workplaces where there was no training or orientation provided whatsoever, with them relying totally on the compassion of their new colleague for tips on how to get started. Neither of them stayed at their respective workplaces for longer than six months.

> *"In principle, I think everyone should be trained as individually as possible but often I find that a "mass production" is the norm."*

Where the opinions differed was when it comes to customised or tailored programs. Some saw these customization efforts as too ambitious and difficult to implement in practice. One idea that came up was that employers could use the possibility to customize the work experience as an incentive among prospective employees.

> *"Creating customized training, or any training for that matter, requires strong commitment from management. It cannot be left to employees only. Too often it is."*

It seems that the concept of customization itself is more difficult to grasp for the older generations, with one person stating that these kinds of ideas were not even on the table in previous decades. Yet, the same person though the idea was good and worth investigating and investing in. Younger people seem to be more familiar of these ideas, even if they find them hard to implement or implausible in practice.

> *"Given my age, I can tell you that before, none of these things (sic, customization) were even discussed at the workplace. I have noticed that today, these things are discussed quite often. I think this is by necessity as the nature of work has changed over the years."*

> *"First thing that comes to my mind is that customized training is very difficult. However, I don't think its impossible given enough time and the right people."*

Everyone interviewed would have liked to have been offered choices in their training even if admitting the challenges associated with them.

> *"I would strongly support choice in the compensation model of the company."*

Analysis

The challenge in qualitative data analysis such as interviews is that the data often lacks a clear structure and might be spread thin and thus cannot be as systemically analysed as quantitative data. Indeed, the process of analysing could even be described as sometimes chaotic with lots of jumping between transcripts and replaying the recorded interviews in hopes of catching a tone of voice or an expression that might give new meaning to certain phrases or sentences.

What was done here is a thematic analysis, a method commonly used in analysing data gathered from interviews. In process of thematic analysis can be condensed into four main steps:
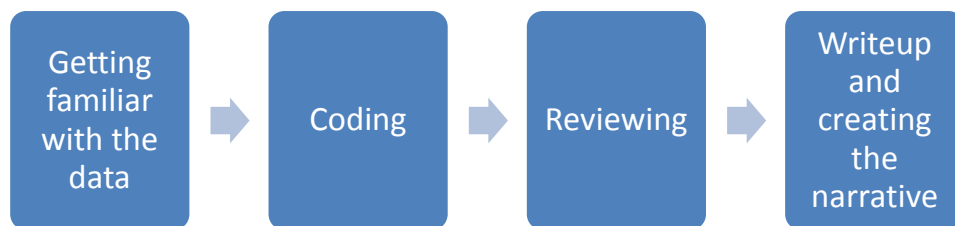

Figure 5: Steps of thematic analysis

1. Getting familiar with the data
2. Coding (or labelling)
3. Reviewing the data
4. Writing the final conclusions or creating a narrative that fits the data

There are tools and software available that are designed to simplify this process, but they were not used and a more traditional approach to data analysis was taken. That is, no tools other than the conventional spreadsheets.

The first step involved reading the transcribed interviews through several times. Repeated listening of the interviews was also necessary at this stage. Repeated listening is important, because sometimes *how* something is said may reveal the nuances that are not identifiable from plain text. In the overarching themes these nuances may not be that relevant, yet in specific points can help in creating the narrative.

The second stage of coding means creating keywords or labels and grouping the data under them. Here it involved moving around pieces of the interview data (sentences or short paragraphs) into groups that in aggregate may reveal themes or patterns that are more easily identifiable.

Reviewing the data involves going back to the transcripts and recordings after the labelling and checking if there are themes, topics or ideas that repeat or stand out. From these, the story or narrative emerges.

Age seems to have an impact on the expectations set by the employee towards employers. Younger people expect a lot more in terms of commitment from employers' side and are not content with working only for the pay check, whereas this seems to have been the norm for older generations. Overall, the results of the interviews were in line with survey results.

6 CONCLUSIONS

Based on information from the survey and interviews, the research questions shall be answered:

- What are people's perceptions of the orientation processes overall?
  - What are the main factors that either lead to success or failure of the programs?

All kinds of training or orientation programs are welcomed among new starters as well as more experienced workers. Some may prefer more streamlined approach, depending on their experience in the field, yet there is clear consensus that all employers ought to invest in training programs.

Important factors in training programs are time, intensity and follow-ups / monitoring.

- Are orientation programs able take individual differences better into account?

Taking individual differences into account seems to depend largely on the readiness of the organization. Referring to the organizational maturity chart on page six, while training and orientation programs are valuable for any organization, customization efforts are better reserved for organizations ranking three or higher on the chart.

The most relevant metrics to track to create customized training are; age, experience and personal preferences.

The most relevant ways in which to customize are: the methods of training (e.g. distant vs contact), compensation schemes, possibility to work distantly.

Validity and reliability

Initially the research was envisioned to be done as a case-study. This turned out to be not possible and the real-world implications of the results cannot be tested. This is the largest single limiting factor to the validity of the research.

Due to the type of this research and the nature of the data, the results may not be readily actionable and implementing them in a meaningful way may prove to be challenging. Additional studies may be required to uncover how to most effectively

implement the changes according to the recommendation. It is suggested that this study act as a framework to which additional research is based on.

Additional research

Similar study could be done repeatedly either with different group of respondents, or the same group later to see if sentiments have developed. Ideally, research would be done as a full case-study. Doing a case study will legitimize the results and lead to more actionable findings. Research ought to be done on *how* to transfer the results of these studies into practice.

Suggestions for research questions for follow-up research:

- How to start implementing customization practices?
- What are the key metrics when implementing these practices?

7   SUMMARY

This paper examined the orientation or training programs employers organize for new employees and evaluates the plausibility of "individualized" or "customized" training programs. These are the new trends in HR that are emerging in the 2010s.

Using interviews and survey as data collection methods, an analysis was done to uncover people's perceptions regarding training/orientation programs and their readiness to accept the new, more focused approaches to HR management. A total of five interviews were done along with a survey that garnered 31 respondents.

After the topic was researched, and the following conclusions were reached:

- Strong support for orientation programs among all groups
- Generally, support for customized training, some confusion on its nature
- Age, experience and personal wishes the most relevant factors for customization efforts

The topic of employee training and orientation is well studied, yet, in practice the programs too often fail to produce the desired outcomes. The perceived failure of these programs is something that was confirmed during the interviews. One of the reasons is that they treat the workforce and the training programs as monolithic entities that leave little room for differences between employees or groups of employees. The new approaches emphasize the differences, strengths and weaknesses between individuals or groups of employees and attempt to tailor the training for them.

The customization does not need to happen on individual level. It is possible to practice "segmentation" among employees.

The research revealed that many find the current training practices lacking in their respective organizations and remain open to the idea of customized training. It also uncovered that any customization effort is depedant on the readiness of the organization, in other words organizational maturity.

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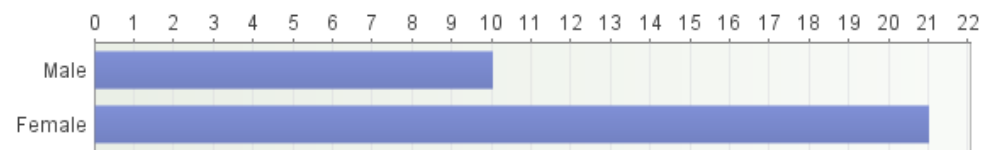
9 APPENDICES
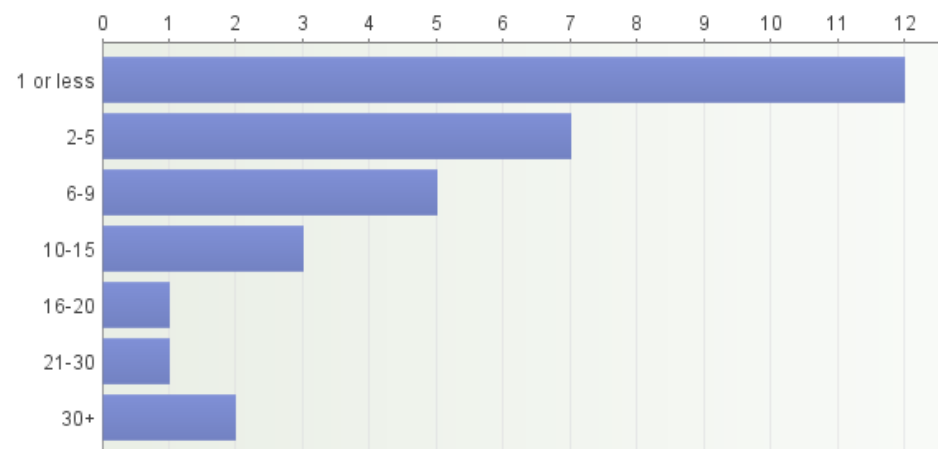
1. Age

Vastaajien määrä: 31
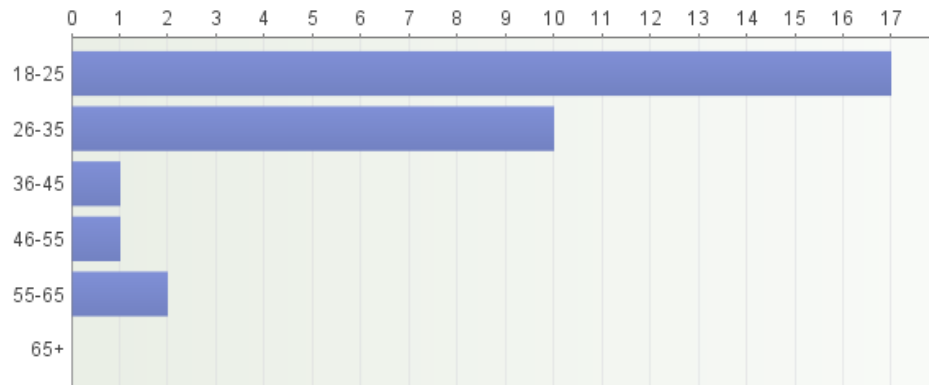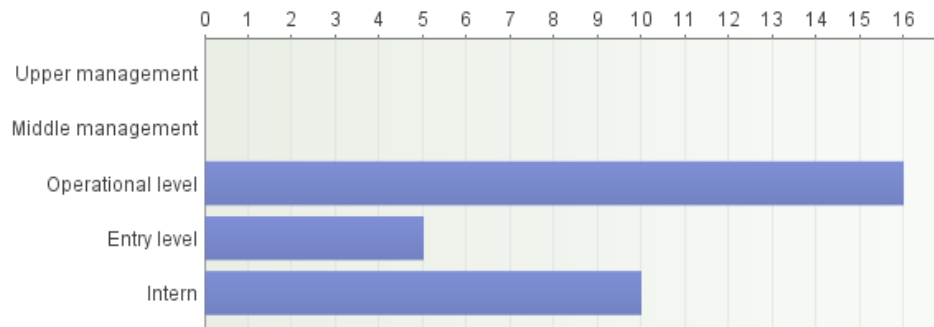

2. Gender

Vastaajien määrä: 31

3. Work experience in years

Vastaajien määrä: 31

4. Most recent rank in the organization

Vastaajien määrä: 31

5. Size of the organization. Approximate staff headcount in parentheses.

Vastaajien määrä: 31

6. I think that employers ought to invest in employee training/orientation programs

Vastaajien määrä: 31

	1	2	3	4	5		Yhteensä	Keskiarvo
Strongly disagree	1	1	6	10	13	Strongly agree	31	4,06

7. I have taken part in training/orientation programs set up by my employer

Vastaajien määrä: 31

	1	2	3	4	5		Yhteensä	Keskiarvo
Strongly disagree	4	5	7	5	10	Strongly agree	31	3,39

8. I have encountered problems at my work that happened due to inadequate training practices

Vastaajien määrä: 31

	1	2	3	4	5		Yhteensä	Keskiarvo
Strongly disagree	5	2	12	9	3	Strongly agree	31	3,1

9. My personal traits and wishes were taken into account during the training/orientation program

Vastaajien määrä: 31

	1	2	3	4	5		Yhteensä	Keskiarvo
Strongly disagree	4	6	11	9	1	Strongly agree	31	2,9

10. Individual traits and wishes should be taken into account in training/orientation programs to the degree that is possible

Vastaajien määrä: 31

	1	2	3	4	5		Yhteensä	Keskiarvo
Strongly disagree	0	1	8	12	10	Strongly agree	31	4

11. It is very difficult for companies to provide training/orientation that is tailored to individuals

Vastaajien määrä: 31

	1	2	3	4	5		Yhteensä	Keskiarvo
Strongly disagree	1	6	8	11	5	Strongly agree	31	3,42

12. Companies ought to provide different avenues for learning depending on my preference. For instance e-learnings vs contact training

Vastaajien määrä: 31

	1	2	3	4	5		Yhteensä	Keskiarvo
Strongly disagree	1	1	7	11	11	Strongly agree	31	3,97

13. Companies should strive to provide career paths or choices that are best suited to individual strengths of their workforce

Vastaajien määrä: 31

	1	2	3	4	5		Yhteensä	Keskiarvo
Strongly disagree	0	0	6	12	13	Strongly agree	31	4,23

14. I have been offered paths and choices by my organization that best suits my individual strenghts and aspirations

Vastaajien määrä: 31

	1	2	3	4	5		Yhteensä	Keskiarvo
Strongly disagree	6	11	6	4	4	Strongly agree	31	2,65

15. I would prefer to choose from different options as incentives or compensation for overtime. For instance i could choose between monetary / time off / benefits / work from home

Vastaajien määrä: 31

	1	2	3	4	5		Yhteensä	Keskiarvo
Strongly disagree	1	2	5	9	14	Strongly agree	31	4,06

16. Training or orientation programs often fail to produce the desired outcomes

Vastaajien määrä: 31

	1	2	3	4	5		Yhteensä	Keskiarvo
Strongly disagree	2	14	10	5	0	Strongly agree	31	2,58

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- What does orientation or training bring to your mind?
- What does the word "customization" bring in your mind in the context of employee training?
- Is it beneficial for employee and employers alike?
- Do you think it's difficult for companies to arrange these procedures? Do you see any obstacles here? Why? Why not?
- What do you think are the metrics the companies should follow?
- Do you think that companies should always provide these custom choices or modular choices to their employees, regardless the size of the organization?
- Do you have any experience with being offered customized choices in your training?
- Would you like to have been offered?
- Do you have anything else to add to this conversation or theme?