# Standardization of the onboarding and training procedures in the company X supply chain environment

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**Abstract**

Onboarding process of new employees is a common procedure in companies regardless of the area of specialisation. If it is logically structured and aligned with organisation's demands, employees' performance is increased. It also aids new hires in adjusting to the company's targets, culture, and requirements. The main objective of the study was to find the ways to standardise and improve training process of new employees in the case company.

Qualitative research method was conducted, during which the current training process of the supply chain department was reviewed as well as its development over the years. Qualitative data was gathered from various sources, including external materials needed for collecting information regarding the discussed issue, data collection from documents related to employees onboarding provided by the company and interviews with employees from the case company during which personal experiences were shared.

The study's findings were related to the examination of strategies for improving the training process based on the information acquired. Firstly, issues connected to the working environment were investigated and summarised. Secondly, based on identified problems, suggestions towards standardisation of the procedure were proposed and grouped into the following categories: internal system structuration, guidelines creation, feedback mechanism implementation and training performance measurements. Moreover, different educational approaches focused on personnel onboarding were examined in order to define which suit the best for the company.

**Keywords/tags (subjects)**

Training process improvement, Standardisation, Material supply, Employee onboarding

**Miscellaneous (Confidential information)**

Appendices 2 and 3 include confidential information, which are hidden from the public thesis. The term of confidentiality for the thesis appendices mentioned in the agreement is five (5) years from the date of thesis approval.

**Contents**

# 1. Introduction

Companies all over the world are united by one process – recruitment of new employees, professionals who are supposed to lead the company to a successful and profitable future. Thus, onboarding process plays a significant role in organisations' well-being. Based on the research conducted by Brandon Hall Group (2015, p. 12) "organizations with a strong onboarding process improve new hire retention by 82% and productivity by over 70%". It gives employees the information, tools, and resources they require to successfully carry out their duties and contribute to the broader aims and objectives of the business. Effective training raises staff engagement, job satisfaction, and job retention in addition to performance. Moreover, it ensures that workers can contribute to a supportive and effective work environment by being in line with the company's values and culture. Continuous training and development are necessary to stay competitive in modern fast-paced and continuously evolving company environment and to make sure that employees have the resources they require to be successful. The performance of any organization depends on the implementation of an effective training program for new hires.

## 1.1 Goal

The study is done for the Finnish company X which specialises in the heavy machinery production. The key issue is that when it comes to employee training, some pressing difficulties could come up that cannot be postponed because the department's primary objective is a serial production line. The main goal of the thesis is to standardise and improve onboarding procedure for the company's supply chain environment. In other words, it is important to provide insights how to ease the training process for both trainees and trainers. Standardisation lessens the strain on the new employee because they always have the protocol outlining their tasks to turn to in case of queries or issues. The outcome of the work is expected to be an improved training process of new members of the department.

## 1.2 Research questions

The following questions must be answered, and an inquiry must be conducted in order to reach the research objective:

1. What is the current training process in company X supply chain environment?

It is crucial to start the research from knowing the current state of employee's integration to the working process, which guidelines already exist, who is responsible for the trainings.

2. From the educational perspective - what approaches exist and which suit company X the best?

   Deep research is required to figure out which teaching approaches are suitable for the company and how they can be adopted.

3. How the training of new employees can be standardised and improved easing the integration to the working environment?

   Based on the already existing data and employees' experience, the general knowledge should be logically structured and presented, easing onboarding process for a new person in the team as well as the company itself.

# 2. Theoretical background

## 2.1. Standardisation

Wüllenweber et al. (2008) defined standardisation as "the improvement of operational performance, cost reduction through decreased process errors, facilitation of communication". To ensure consistency across a department, standardization entails establishing and documenting every operation, method, and procedure for carrying out tasks. By minimizing process errors, enhancing communication, or simply taking advantage of specialists' knowledge which has been used to create process standards to achieve those goals, the standardization of business processes attempts to increase operational performance and decrease costs. Process standardization involves adaptability, general descriptions of metrics, and languages that keep the consistency of business procedures (Cooper, 2004).

Standardisation plays a crucial role in the improvement of organisational process efficiency. As Bano (2022) noted when the clear model exists, team of professionals in a specific field is aware of the procedures to use and the actions to take in order to give the desired results on schedule. It is required to understand what is the wanted outcome from the standardisation, what is the goal of the process and what materials already exist on the topic. If business processes are standardised, it allows to reduce the total process variance, making it easier to execute a specific business process as well as decrease wasted time spent on extra searching. A standardized business process is easier to accomplish or run than a non-standardized business process, so it can be operated with a shorter cycle time (Münstermann, Eckhardt, & Weitzel, 2010). This is the positive impact of process standardization on business process time. Personnel are going to devote less time attempting to understand a job and more time carrying it out if they have an unambiguous set of guidelines to follow. Moreover, it increases the quality of the done work since standards can reduce the likelihood that significant information will be omitted (Brandall, 2018).

Given that employees enter an organization with varying levels of skill, standardization fosters a sense of mutual understanding among the team. Individuals respond in accordance with a predetermined set of guidelines and protocols rather than dealing with every case as it occurs.

## 2.2. Onboarding procedure

Onboarding is the practice of assisting newly hired employees in rapidly and easily adjusting to the social and performance demands of their new positions. Based on research conducted by Shah and Pollak, before the conclusion of the first year, about one in three recently hired employees quit the company, either willingly or involuntarily (Nik Shah). This results negatively on the company’s outcomes as well as performance. The reasons of the poor onboarding might be connected to unclear statement of responsibilities, poor communication between a manager and a new employee and a vast information flow with which a newcomer must deal, making them confused and lost.

According to Karambelkar (2017), onboarding involves everything from orientation to training to making sure new employees understand the company's policies and procedures. Training and mentoring are necessary to make sure that a person meets requires SKA, what stands for Knowledge, Skills and Abilities. At this stage, it's important to ensure that the employee is given ongoing support and feedback throughout their onboarding process. This may include regular check-ins with their supervisor or mentor, as well as periodic performance reviews. This helps ensure that the employee is set up for success and that any potential issues are addressed in a timely manner. The onboarding process typically begins before the employee's first day, with the completion of paperwork and other administrative tasks. This may include completing forms and other paperwork required by the company, signing a non-disclosure agreement, and more. It's important to ensure that all these steps are taken before the employee's first day so that they can hit the ground running (SHRM, n.d.). Once the orientation is complete, the employee should be given the resources they need to do their job effectively. This may include access to necessary software, training materials, and any other resources that will help them succeed. (Anderson, n.d.).

In 2018 information regarding the importance of onboarding was publish by Statista research department (Talmundo & School, 2018).

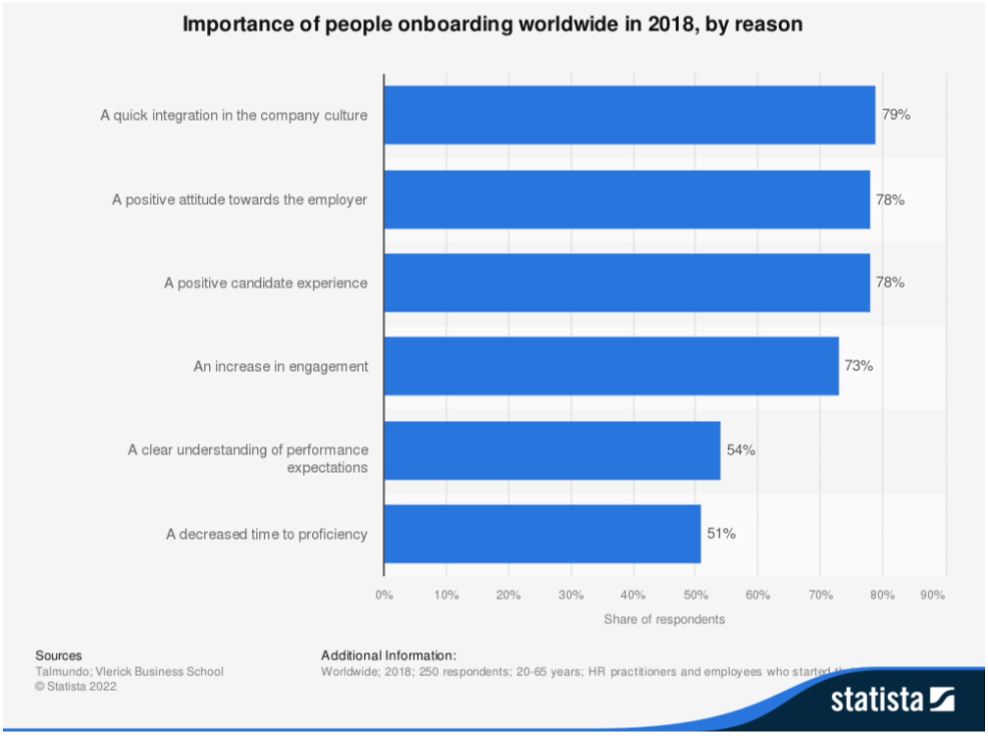



*Figure 1. Importance of people onboarding worldwide in 2018*

A survey involved 250 respondents, ranging in age from 20 to 65. According to the graph, 79% of respondents believe that onboarding is a good method to quickly become a part of an organization's culture, and about the same number (78%) say that it helps them develop a positive mindset toward their employer.

It is crucial to analyse data connected to employee experience in order to build strong onboarding. Several KPIs exist which could be helpful in measuring onboarding process. Holliday (2021), Senior product marketing manager in Oracle, came up with 7 KPIs.

1. New-hire satisfaction

Employee interviews and anonymous surveys are used to gather information. The NPS (Net Promoter Score) can be utilized to gauge satisfaction. According to their onboarding experience, new recruits are surveyed to determine their likelihood, on a scale of 1 to 10, of recommending the organization to a friend or colleague depending on their company integration. The following formula is utilised for the measurement:

NPS = % of promoters - % of detractors, where

– Promoters – those who rated 9 or 10
– Detractors – those who rated between 1 and 6
– 7 and 8 – considered to be passive

The higher company's NPS score, the move staff members are inclined to suggest the company as a place to work.

2. Voluntary and involuntary new-hire turnover

Voluntary turnover counts the number of employees who quit their jobs willingly. In case this figure is greater than anticipated and new employees resign fairly fast after the start dates, it is obvious that something is wrong with either recruiting process or employee satisfaction. As the result, additional costs, such as recruitment costs, emerge. With a formula below voluntary new-hire turnover rate can be calculated:

Voluntary turnover rate = (number of new employees who leave willingly during period X/ total number of new employees during period X) * 100

It is essential to figure out why people are leaving by analysing the environment they used to work in as well as managers who also might be the reason for a higher quitting rate.

Departments that experience involuntary turnover are eventually forced to make cuts. Additionally, managers may find that a newly hired person does not fit the standards for the position. A case of a poor hire suggests issues with the recruiting or onboarding processes. The following formula is used to evaluate Involuntary turnover rate:

Involuntary turnover rate = (number of new employees who are forced to leave during period X/ total number of new employees during period X) * 100

3. Retention

Retention measures the number of employees who continued working in a company for a specific period of time. It is estimated by SHRM (Society for human resource management) that approximately 50% of the staffs' turnover appears in 18 months since a person started working in an organisation. Numerous companies use 18 months as a standard. It is likely that a worker will continue working in a company if they remain after that time has passed.

Retention rate = number of new employees who remain with the business or at least 18 months within a specific timeframe/ total number of new employees during a specific timeframe

4. Training completion rate

Training completion rate = number of new employees completed raining in a specific period / total number of new employees in a specific period

Low raining completion rate an indicate issues which might be connected to inadequate time given for the training or lack of support from a supervisor. Contrarily, high training completion rates show employees' desire in enhancing their job effectiveness and achieving promotion objectives.

5. Time to productivity

To obtain a sense of how effective a company's onboarding process is, it is essential to know how long it takes to pass all the necessary knowledge for the job from the first employee's first day on the job until they are confident enough to function independently.

Time to productivity = total number of days spent to pass the knowledge to new employees resulting in further work independency / total number of new employees in a specific timeframe

6. Engagement rates

Engagement of employees represents their connection to the employer resulting in productivity and orientation towards organisation’s success. It is calculated using the same formula as in new-hire satisfaction KPI - eNPS which stands for employee Net Promoter Score.

eNPS = % of promoters - % of detractors

In cases of new employees’ absence at work, absenteeism rate should be calculated:

Absenteeism rate = (number of new employees’ absence at work in a specific timeframe / total number of new employees’ working days in a specific timeframe) *100

7. Return on investments (ROI)

ROI can be measured through time to productivity, engagement, or rates of procurement. Each company should identify KPIs needed to measure onboarding ROI. Return of investment is expected to be fast if onboarding is done properly. Holliday (2021) provided an example of a possible KPI:

Revenue per employee ratio = Net sales in a given period / average number of employees in the same period.

## 2.3 Training procedure

Standardisation is also applicable for training. When there is a single proper method to train a new worker, each staff member picks up the same amount of knowledge. As a result, there are fewer or no information gaps, which strengthens the workforce (E.M. Kikundwa, 2021). Training is the process of acquiring or imparting the knowledge and skills necessary for a specific career or activity (Dictionary, n.d.). When a person experiences a lack of proficiency in a specific field related to their work, training is the solution to fill the knowledge gap. The goal of the procedure is not to only assist new employees but also to prepare the current personnel for the challenges posed by the organization's and a job's evolving requirements. This primarily focuses on acquiring and refining newer abilities, for example updating technical competence of employees in order to be sure they are able to complete daily tasks effectively and time efficiently (Mutsuddi, 2011).

An effective training process typically begins with an assessment of the company's needs and objectives. This assessment should include an analysis of the existing skill sets of the workforce, the company's goals, and any gaps or deficiencies in the current training program. Once the assessment is complete, the company can develop a training plan. This plan should include the specific goals and objectives of the training program, the type of training to be used, the timeline for completion, and the budget for the program. The next step in the training process is to implement the plan. This includes delivering the training, evaluating the progress of the employees, and providing feedback. Training should be tailored to the individual needs of the employees. Finally, the company should evaluate the effectiveness of the training. This includes measuring the impact of the training on employee performance, measuring employee satisfaction, and determining whether the goals and objectives of the training program were met (Sangurde, 2019).

### 2.3.1 ADKAR change management model

The acronym "ADKAR" stands for awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement. These 4 terms are the obligatory phases which are required to be followed if a company wants to successfully achieve a particular change (Karambelkar, 2017). Prosci (n.d.), a leading provider of change management resource, developed the ADKAR model, which is one of the crucial elements required to achieve a successful shift. Table 1 highlights ADKAR phases that are compared to project management aspects: requirements, design, implementation, and post-implementation respectively to ADKAR phases.  Program management is needed to deal with technical obligations while handling human factors requires change management.

Table 1. Phases of change management and project management

| ADKAR phases | Change management | Project phases | Project management | Key activities related to change |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Awareness | 1 | Requirements | Communication, Sponsorship |
| 2 | Desire | 2 | Design | Coaching, Resistance/Stress Management |
| 3 | Knowledge | 3 | Implementation | Coaching, Mentoring, and Training |
| 4 | Ability | | | |
| 5 | Reinforcement | 4 | Post-implementation | Coaching, Sponsorship |

According to Malhotra (2019) there are 5 phases in the change management. The following phases have a significant value to the process.

1. Awareness is the first step that includes a new employee being introduced to the company's values, showing how an organisation is structured. It is also very important to let other employees know about a new coming person and their professional background, knowledge of which could be beneficial to the further training process.
2. During the Desire phase a new member of the stuff, who is already motivated to work in the organisation but due to starting a new job, could experience a fear of the unknown. The role of the manager is to lower the stress level by providing support in terms of knowledge, access to information required to accomplish specific duties, and socialisation which is crucial especially in the beginning of a person's professional career.
3. Knowledge phase is connected to gaining experience in systems usage, tools and processes which are required for the job. Trainings from co-workers, online courses can be implemented to educate a person based on their knowledge gap.
4. After gaining knowledge needed for the job, a new employees had to show their abilities, demonstrate that they are suitable for a position and are able to take full responsibility of the actions. Feedback is essential at this point, which will help a person to understand what should be improved or which skills should be acquired.
5. The last but not least phase is reinforcement. The new worker is aware of his or her responsibility in relation to the position. Programs for rewards and recognition and performance management systems aid in reinforcing.

Program management concentrates on a variety of aspects, including budget, risk management, planning, timing, and reporting. As it was already mentioned, requirements, design, implementation, and post- implementation are the aspects which create a successful onboarding according to Karambelkar (2017).

1. Throughout hiring process valuable information is obtained about a new worker. It is useful for analysing the knowledge gap while figuring out onboarding requirements based on person's abilities. Another requirement is resources that have to be provided, such as a working space and all the needed equipment necessary to accomplish daily tasks.
2. There should be a structure of the onboarding process. However, it is expected to be adjusted to a person's background and their needs.
3. During the implementation, if organizational values are introduced throughout training, then new employees need to see those principles put into action. A positive experience will result from prompt assistance, knowledge, and resource provision.
4. Post-implementation correlates with reinforcement, representing what was achieved and learnt successfully and which issues need to be discussed once again.

### 2.3.2 Traditional On-the-job training (OJT)

On-the-job training is one of the most widely used approaches when it comes to training. However, it is believed to be not the most efficient one. The main responsibility of the trainer is to do the work first and when it is done, training of a new employee starts or continuous (Sisson, 2001). In other words, when a problem occurs, it is a priority and it must be solved as soon as possible, so that the workflow could continue avoiding delays. That is how training process stops until all the issues are resolved. Trainees usually do not participate in problem solving because they could slow the process due to, for example, lack of knowledge. Overall, work issues always come first which are primarily objectives, and when instructor has time, training of new personnel carries on with. This leads to a disorganised training with a limited control over the process.

Those professionals who are assigned to train new co-workers are experts in their niche with years of experience. However, due to their prior lack of experience in how to instruct others, they frequently lack the necessary skills to train and pass the knowledge in the most comprehensible and standardized manner. The absence of standardisation might result in series of complications if, for instance, a new employee has several instructors who have various approaches in terms of training. In such situation it is challenging for a newcomer to follow the training and gain needed knowledge, what can also result in the productivity decrease as well as mistakes which can lead to further trouble (On-the-Job Training, n.d.).

Traditional OJT allows an instructor to choose how they want to organise the training. Both showing and telling are widely used strategies. Which of the above-mentioned methods are used more depends on the person teaching. Some people prefer to outline the steps that should be taken before letting the person complete the assignment on their own with minimal supervision. Others offer guidance and consult with them, while a trainee is performing their duties. In both cases, two people are engaged to do the work which is originally a workload for one person. In other words, the productivity level decreases while labour costs increase (Reddy, n.d.). Extra costs for the companies are not efficient, that is why training is supposed to be completed in a fixed time. It is hard to achieve with a traditional OJT since the core idea is to keep the workflow going no matter what, consequently the training is put on pause. Thus, various interruptions and fixed training period results in insufficient training, possible lack of competence of the person trained and labour costs increase.

Despite above mentioned negative sides of the traditional OJT, there are a few reasons why it can be still used as a training resource. Regardless of the work, training always concludes with the trainee performing the actual duties, receiving real working experience (Vasanthi Sree, 2019). Because of this, many people find on-the-job training particularly appealing, especially those who acquire knowledge best by doing. A person receives hands-on training with tools, techniques, or software throughout this procedure (Learning, 2021). Also, Montgomery (2021) pointed out that OTJ offers support and counsel. It takes more time and effort to coach and direct a new employee's skill development with every task when they start working. The level of control decreases as competency increases because the new hire is proficient in the job and can complete it with little to no supervision.

### 2.3.3 Hands-On Training (HOT)

Sisson (2001) stated that The Hands-On- Training was developed by Paradigm Corporation which is originally an organisation focused on on-the-job training. The author explained that the above-mentioned firm has come up with the following 6 steps of the Hands-On training (HOT POPPER):

1. Prepare for training – inexperienced employee is sent to the instructor to train on the job. The instructor analyses his or her notes, considers what to say, and chooses the most effective approach to demonstrate the job specification processes. It is crucial to prepare any software or documentation required for the training beforehand. Additionally, the location of the training needs to be selected such that both the instructor and the new employee feel at ease and are not distracted by disturbances.
2. Open the session – the start of the subject introduction occurs when the teacher and a new team member meet. During this phase, trainer can also evaluate person’s background and already obtained skills in order to know where to begin the training process.
3. Present the subject – instructor demonstrates how to complete the tasks properly while taking their time and not overloading a person with information. In this step, a trainee listens to explanations and asks questions if anything is remaining unclear. The following two steps—practice and evaluation—start when a trainee declares that they have grasped and would feel competent to perform the tasks. The process is repeated until all of the information is understood by the person, if necessary.
4. Practice the skills
5. Evaluate performance

   The fourth ($4^{th}$) and fifth ($5^{th}$) steps are connected and carried out at the same time. While a person practices performing certain job-related procedures, a supervisor is paying attention and delivering feedback on the trainee's actions as well as suggestions on how to enhance performance. To ensure that a trainee fully understands how to execute duties and makes no mistakes, the work is typically done numerous times. If the activity at hand is quite complex, it should be broken up into numerous phases and practiced separately before being done all at once. By doing this, a new employee won't be overwhelmed by the complexity of the activity, and it will be simpler for the instructor to determine which step needs more explanation.

6. Review the subject – to ensure that a person thoroughly knows how to handle the task in the future, a supervisor can ask a few closing questions regarding the job. The following work-related topic can then be covered, or a test assignment could be given. The latter still requires supervisor involvement, which steadily decreases as a person gains confidence in their work.

Coaching is regarded as one of HOT POPPER's tactics. The mentor gives the new employee the opportunity to complete the task while carefully evaluating their performance, paying close attention to what they did well and what still needs improvement. At this point, it is crucial that an instructor refrain from interjecting unless doing so could potentially result in major blunders (University, 2015).

Sisson (2001, p. 17) stated that Hands-On training is better than traditional OJT because “ the training follows a step-by-step system, the trainee learns the “official” method of doing the job and the instructor is trained to use HOT.”

**2.3.4 Mentoring**

Herrity (2022) listed mentoring as one of the training methods which can be implemented in addition to other teaching techniques. A mentorship happens when a mentor offers assistance to a mentee while imparting important expertise, abilities, and knowledge. Establishing a mentoring program at work promotes opportunities for development that can help new employees progress in their professional lives and can support a friendly workplace environment.

These relationships have benefits for both parties, not just the mentees. As it was stated in Forbes (n.d.), mentors have the chance to improve their communication and leadership abilities, acquire novel perspectives, and experience a greater sense of purpose in their careers. One of the main reasons mentorships can fail is a lack of sufficient resources and support. Because of this, mentors and mentees must be provided with instructions or directions before they interact. Throughout the course of the program, assistance tools and resources should be easily accessible to ensure smooth.

Because it fosters a welcoming learning environment where the mentee can ask questions, get feedback, and learn at their own speed, mentoring is an effective teaching strategy. One advantage of mentoring as a teaching strategy is that it can be customized to the requirements and preferences of the learner. The mentor can tailor their instruction to the mentee's preferred learning style and concentrate on the areas where the mentee most requires support. The objective of the program must be specifically stated and include information on the knowledge and skills that must be acquired (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000).

### 2.3.5 Employee-led training system (ELT)

Employee-led training (ELT) is another sort of employee education that is seen as a cost-effective method of educating new hires. Stage Insight was the name given to the system when it was unveiled by Stage Entertainment Germany. Businesses can concentrate on their own needs by employing ELT. The system is advantageous to both trainees and instructors. The former understand that no extraneous knowledge is given, and that the training's subject matter is relevant to the business's actual demands. The latter prove their expertise through instructing and may even review their previously learned material. Utilizing internal resources (employees' knowledge) allows for a cost savings. As a result, it is not necessary to hire external trainers for a brief time. (Sutton, 2010)

To guarantee that only valuable information is taught, it is vital for instructors who will train new employees to be able to develop their own curricula with little intervention from HR and supervisors. This will help to ensure that the ELT system is effective. Additionally, Sutton (2010) claimed instructors should acquire training themselves because it is common for people who are motivated to share their knowledge with others but lack the skills necessary to effectively convey it. To pass on the knowledge of how to handle stressful situations, how to assess trainee learning, and how to create appealing trainings, so-called "train-the-trainer" seminars should be delivered by training professionals with academic degrees hired by organisations. HR is also expected to organize training locations, prepare documentation, and arrange catering if necessary. Last but not least, the organization should give the instructors a token of appreciation, be it provision of some time off or monetary compensation.

# 3. Methodology

## 3.1 Research methods

Research is the in-depth study of a topic, often with the goal of learning something new or coming to a fresh knowledge (Cambridge dictionary, n.d.). There are 3 types of research methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed.

John W. Creswell defined qualitative research as “an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting” (Creswell J. W., 1994, pp. 1-2). Hennink (Qualitative Research Methods, 2020) characterised qualitative research as a method which provides an opportunity to gather people’s thoughts and their previous experience through interviews, target groups, observations, texts, and documents analysis. Those who are involved in qualitative research are called “participants”, whose role is to share their opinions in terms of interviews and discussions In other words, by utilising it, non-numerical data is gathered and analysed to comprehend ideas, beliefs, and experiences. (Bhandari, What Is Qualitative Research?, 2020) According to John W. Creswell (2009,a), qualitative researchers tend to gather required information themselves, which might include several different forms of data to increase reliability of the research.

Obtaining and evaluating numerical information is the process of quantitative research. It can be used to identify trends, averages, and forecast outcomes (Bhandari, 2020). In quantitative research, observations are represented and altered numerically with the goal of defining and clarifying the phenomena they reflect. It is employed in a broad range of social and natural sciences (Sukamolson, 2007).

According to John W. Creswell (2014), qualitative and quantitative methods are just two distinct ends of a continuum rather than mutually exclusive techniques. When a research problem requires collection of qualitative data as well as quantitative data, mixed method is applied (Creswell J. W., 2014). A. Tashakkori and J. W. Creswell defined mixed method as “'research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or program of enquiry" (2007, p. 4). The fundamental premise of this type of research is that using both qualitative and quantitative methods together yields a more comprehensive understanding of a research issue than either method by itself (2014).

While considering above discussed research methods and the specifics of the thesis topic, the researcher believes that qualitative method is the most suitable one. During the research qualitative data collection methods will be utilised, including interviews with employees of the company and document analysis provided by the case company.

## 3.2 Data collection method

In order to answer stated research questions, data must be collected. The author of the thesis was using 2 types of data – secondary and primary.

Stephanie Glen defined secondary data as an information obtained from studies, polls, or experiments that have been conducted by others or for other types of study (Glen, n.d.). Data can be obtained through already published essays, textbooks, reports, journals. Secondary data has several benefits, one of which is affordability. Additionally, it makes it possible to quickly gather the data needed to discover solutions to a variety of questions (David W. Stewart, 1993). However, information obtained by a third party might be not accurate enough. Thus, trustworthiness and precision are decreasing (Kabir, 2016). Since the researcher was conducting their thesis on the company's topic request, secondary research and revision of documents were done by utilizing the company's already-existing resources and data to be able to answer stated research questions.

The data was presented by the assigned company X through the signed NDA between both parties – researcher and the case company. The grounds of confidentiality are the following:

1. Information on any business or professional secret of a private business, the State, a municipality, some other public corporation or a corporation, institution or foundation (Act on the Openness of Government Activities, section 24, paragraphs 17 and 20).

2. The term of confidentiality for the thesis appendices mentioned in this agreement is _5__ years from the date of thesis approval.

Based on the above stated terms, confidential materials cannot be publicly published for 5 years. However, the information from the company was used to evaluate the current onboarding process and gain understanding of training steps, particularly which duties a new employee should be familiar with and their priorities.

Another type of data is called primary data. According to Syed Muhammad Sajjad Kabir (2016, p. 204) primary data is “data that has been collected from first-hand-experience”, which was not published anywhere before, being more reliable and unbiased. Primary data can be obtained though interviews, data analysis, questionnaires. Since the researcher is responsible for collecting the data, it is more expensive and time-consuming comparing to the secondary data collection (Bouchrika, 2022). Besides, sometimes it might be difficult to collect primary data due to various factors, for example the lack of cooperation. Nevertheless, obtainment of primary data allows the researcher to get information which is specifically needed for the research. Also, it is possible to get additional information if something, from the researcher’s point of view, needs to be specified (Kabir, 2016).

Interviews can be divided into 3 categories: unstructured, semi structured, and structured. According to Statistics Solutions (n.d.) unstructured interviews frequently develop in the same way that a typical conversation would, despite the fact that it relates to the study issue in question. Inquisitive questions should be asked of participants by the researcher in order to get as much detailed information as feasible. In a semi-structured interview, the person conducting it establishes the subjects to be covered and the order in which they will be covered, but the interviewee's responses define the direction the interview will take. In order to give researchers the opportunity to gain a thorough understanding of the subject of interest necessary for crafting pertinent and insightful semi-structured questions, semi-structured interviews tend to be preceded by observation, informal interviewing, and unstructured interviewing. In a structured interview, the questions asked strictly regulate the information that the respondent provides. The discussion is structured since the investigator uses a planned order and a fixed list of questions, together with a finite number of response options. This would be suitable for use in interviews that call for the participant to respond to each listed question, which are frequently of a shorter duration (Stuckey, 2013).

Document analysis is a methodical study or evaluation process for printed and electronic materials. There are many different types of documents that can be utilized for systematic assessment as part of a study. A few examples are commercials, agendas, participation logs, and meeting minutes. Documents can offer information about the context in which research participants interact—a situation in which the text provides context. Documents serve as witnesses to the events of the past and offer background knowledge and historical perspective. Additionally, information found in documents may point to specific queries to be made and circumstances to be watched for while conducting the study (Bowen, 2009).

Case study is the type of research done by the author of the thesis which is focused on standardisation and improvement of onboarding and training processes in the company. Interviews are therefore one of the methods of data collection used in the ongoing study. In-depth interviews are mostly used to collect data from HR representatives as well as personnel that operate in a supply chain environment. Agenda of interviews is connected to their experiences – how their onboarding started, which difficulties they have faced during trainings, which training system was used for training, etc.

## 3.3 Data analysis

According to Luff and Lacey (2009), the vast amount of text generated through interviews or empirical information has to be summarized and interpreted. The answer to the question might necessitate the researcher to look for connections among different themes that have been noted. The processes below are often followed during the analysis of qualitative data:

1. Acquiring familiarity with the information through evaluation, reading, listening, etc.

2. Transcribing tape recorded content

3. Examining connections across different categories

4 approaches to qualitative data analysis exist – theoretical propositions, triangulations, grounded theory and content analysis.

Zikmund et al. (2009, p. 39) stated that theory as "a formal, testable explanation of some events that includes explanations of how things relate to one another". A hypothesis can be created by evaluating prior research findings from related studies, using straightforward reasoning, or by understanding relevant theoretical fields. Zikmund et al. (2009, p. 42) also defined propositions as "statements concerned with the relationships among concepts." By claiming that all concepts are universally connected, a proposition clarifies the logical relationship between specific conceptions. Throughout the research, the hypothesis can be examined. The researcher can confirm the hypothesis that suits best by gathering empirical data or conducting observations as there are typically multiple theories accessible.

To create a thorough understanding of a phenomenon, triangulation in qualitative research refers to the utilization of various approaches or sources of information. Triangulation is additionally considered a qualitative research technique to examine validity by bringing together data from many sources. Methodological triangulation, investigator triangulation, theoretical triangulation, and data triangulation are the four different types of triangulation meaning gathering information using at least two techniques, at least two researchers are responsible for the data gathering and analysis, at least two theoretical views are used to interpret the facts and gathering data using various sampling techniques respectively (Nancy Carter, 2014).

Content analysis is a method of examining documents that places a focus on the significance of the investigator in creating and constructing meaning in texts. Allowing categories to develop from data and acknowledging their importance for comprehending the meaning of the context in which an item being studied is significant for understanding the categories that emerge from data (Graue, 2016). A research question must be created first. The researcher can use open-ended questions instead of working with hypotheses because qualitative content analysis is inductive. As a result, if they discover ideas and patterns in the text that they had not considered previously, they might change their study questions and the categories (Marilyn Domas White, 2006).

Grounded theory is used to create theories. Instead of theory testing, the primary goal of grounded theory is theory creation. In situations where a theory cannot adequately describe a process, this design is appropriate.The recording and interpretation of people's subjective experiences is made easier by grounded theory. It facilitates the abstraction of people's subjective experience into theoretical claims through the methodological procedure of empirical sampling and ongoing comparison (Margaret M. Cullen, 2021). A variety of sources, such as interviews, observations, paperwork, or books, can be used to obtain the data. A process or plan connected to a phenomenon can be explained by the researcher by using grounded theory and its methodologies in a study (Graue, 2016).

Performing grounded theory analysis gives researchers the chance to examine the study's methodology in greater detail. The current study's primary focus is relatively constrained, allowing the researcher to collect reliable data through interviews with open-ended questions while staying inside the constraints of a defined topic and research objectives. When the research framework is fairly constrained and the study has a distinct context and objective, this form of analysis should be applied. Results of the research are focused to create theoretical actions to be taken by the case company.

## 3.4 Ethical considerations

The ethical issues surrounding the research's conduct are crucial, in addition to the need of choosing a suitable research technique and procedures. “Informed consent” is the foundation of ethical inquiry.  Respondents must be thoroughly informed of the requirements, the intended use of information, and any possible adverse effects. It is crucial that participant information remain anonymous or secure, and the guarantees go beyond simply safeguarding their names to also cover refraining from utilizing self-identifying language and material. The privacy of the participant refers to the fact that although the researcher is aware of the participant’s identity, the identity is kept discreet and data gathered is de-identified (FLEMING, 2018).

It is significant to highlight that the aforementioned elements were followed during the research. Interviewees were introduced to the research topic in advance; however, interview questions were not shared beforehand (with the exception of 2 participants). Asked questions did not require preparation since they were focused on personal experiences of interviewees. Also, questions were not involving personal details of the respondents. Collected data remained anonymous during the analysis done in sections 4.2 and 4.3.

# 4. Analysis of research results

Chapter 4 analyses the collected data obtained from the company X's employees. Already existing materials regarding training process are taken into consideration. Evaluation of the current onboarding and training procedures is discussed.

## 4.1 Interviews

The author of the thesis chose the interview method in order to collect information from supply chain employees as well as Human resource (HR) department. An introductory email was sent to arrange interviews. Participants were informed in advance about the aim of the research.

12 interviews were conducted to obtain knowledge about the current onboarding and training processes held in the supply chain environment. Tables 2 and 3 represent the information collected from interviewees in the beginning of each interview.

*Table 2. Interviewees - Material flow controllers*

| Interviewee | Gender | Position | With company X from (year) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | Female | Material flow controller | 2016 |
| 3 | Female | Material flow controller (Inbound specialist) | 2018 |
| 10 | Female | Material flow controller (Logistics engineer) | Jul.18 |
| 2 | Male | Material flow controller | Sep.21 |
| 9 | Male | Material flow controller | Oct.21 |
| 6 | Male | Material flow controller | Sep.22 |
| 8 | Female | Material flow controller | Mar.22 |
| 1 | Male | Material flow controller | Jan.23 |
| 4 | Male | Material flow controller | Jan.23 |
| 5 | Female | Material flow controller | Jan.23 |

*Table 3. Interviewees - Manager & HR*

| Interviewee | Gender | Position | With company X from (year) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 12 | Male | Logistics manager | 2013 |
| 11 | Female | HR | 2018 |

It is clear based on the Table 2 that the majority of interview participants share the same position as material flow controllers. 2 interviewees currently occupy other positions in the company. However, they used to be material flow controllers, that is why the author of the thesis decided to conduct interviews with them as well in order to collect more information regarding the development of training process over the years. Logistics manager and HR representative were additionally interviewed (Table 3) to receive various perspectives on the issue. It was important to know the start of employees' work in the company to have a clear view how the training has changed.

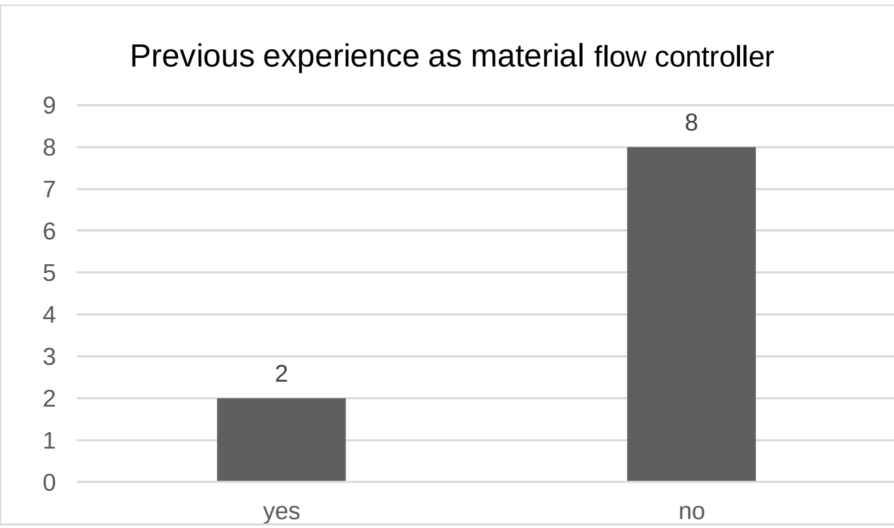
Questions were prepared in advance, so that discussions could be held as smooth as possible. Due to the necessity to learn about personal experiences of interviewees, open questions were asked. Interviewer tried to avoid questions which could be answered with "yes" and "no" since it was crucial to gain a deeper understanding of the training procedure. Interviewer recorded conducted interviews with notes taken during and after conversations for the purpose of collecting the most accurate information. Appendix 1 incudes predefined questions asked during interviews.

## 4.2 Interview results – material flow controllers

After the data was collected, the author of the thesis was able to evaluate how training in supply chain has developed. The main responsibility of material flow controllers is to secure availability of the serial parts for the production line. In other words, deal and prevent shortages of ordered details, arrange and control the flow as well as delivery of goods required for machinery manufacturing, so that the production is followed according to the plan and a steady, sufficient quantity of details is available.

Table 4 highlights how many employees had previous working experience as material flow controllers.

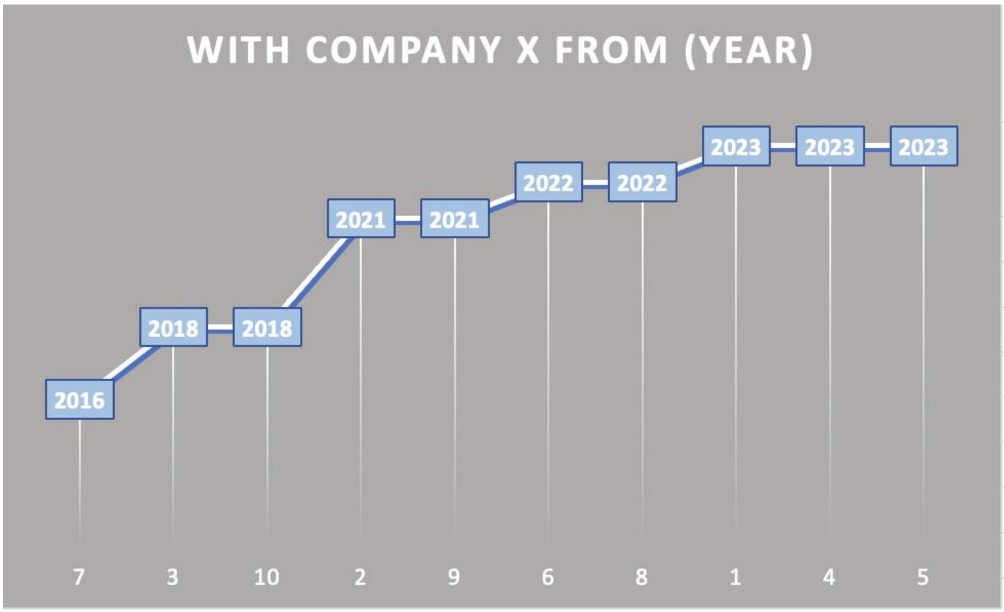
*Table 4.Previous experience as material flow controllers*



For 80 % of employees the job was new. However, due to prior experience in the logistics field (work in other companies or internships), for some people it was easier to start the work because they already gained knowledge of utilisation of ERP system, supplier contacting, etc.

Table 5 represents different years when interviewed employees started their positions. For privacy purposes interviewees were assigned numbers.

*Table 5. Start of work (years)*




Before the first day at work, all participants were sent links to gain access to a website where company was introduced, as well as safety rules since supply chain department is located on the factory and safety is crucial. For those, who had never worked as material flow controllers, training was provided. Based on the collected data, from 2016 to 2021 no specific plan existed how to train new employees.

In 2016 there was no structured onboarding, a person had to learn mostly everything themselves. First few days at work were focused on learning basic transactions which were explained by another material flow controller. However, the trainer could not spend more time on individual training because they had to do other work-related tasks. If any questions appeared, a person could ask for the help from their colleagues. Despite the fact that Interviewee № 7 had previous working experience in the similar field which helped to manage operations efficiently, the main struggle was to memorise all new information leant during the day and be able to perform the next day because working environment was rather fast.

During 2018 2 people were hired for the job. Both of them had a similar training as a person who joined the team in 2016 – one person with experience in the field was mainly responsible for the training. During the first week there was an explanation of fundamentals, shadowing the trainer and the list of first suppliers was provided. After that, if some questions appeared, the first person to contact for help was the training responsible. It is pointed out that there was no schedule or clear program (tasks) set. The difference between new hired people for the position in 2018 was that one of them already had similar working experience while another person was working in a different field. That is why for the later, more new information was needed to be learnt and more skills had to be developed. 2018 was the year when the training program started to be built and first changes have been made. Tasks were written down, what should be done daily/weekly. Based on that, later material flow manager started to create a task list – categorised tasks which an employee has to master in order to be able to work independently.

3 years later, in 2021 2 more people joined the material supply team a month apart from each other. For both new hires material supply position was new. However, Interviewee № 9 had previous working background in logistics while for Interviewee № 2 it was the first professional experience which started with 4 months practical training. In 2021 a short list of tasks existed, what a person had to do but the actual training began when those tasks were explained by colleagues, how to complete tasks was shown. Colleagues were considered to be a new hire's support in the beginning of the career since they knew how to complete tasks. Manager's role was mainly progress check and the "big picture" presentation, what was happening. When first suppliers were assigned, a mentor was checking on the work done, answering questions, and supporting if needed. Both trainer and trainee had their own responsibilities, that is why the trainer could not devote all their time to training. A new employee who didn't have working experience was shadowing another person during the day, paying attention how the job was done. During the first weeks a person was following people from the team, trying to take notes and remember work related details. When they received all the equipment and internal access in order to start the job, transactions' practice started. Interviewees claimed that learning by doing was the best approach for them since they could apply knowledge straight to real cases and

problems, just looking how the work is done was not helping them to get understanding how to do the required tasks.

The following year the position of material flow controller was filled with 2 new people in March and September. Both of interviewed employees had working experience in logistics. One of them worked in supply chain before, that is why Interviewee № 8 knew the basics and it was easier for them to start the work.  During their first week they did not have any suppliers, the main idea was to deal with technical issues, see what other people were doing, learn from their actions. Tasks were explained by the assigned coworkers when they had time to teach, meaning that if something urgent happened, training stopped till the moment the situation was resolved. In 2022 a training template was developed and since that moment it was used as a base for onboarding process. Existing material flow controllers were assigned to check if certain steps from the plan had been learnt or not. However, from the teaching perspective, there was no specific plan who taught which topic, new hires had to ask those who were free. Except from the training template, another sheet was provided with information regarding daily tasks.

Training template is used nowadays and includes all the necessary tasks which are divided into 11 categories. Table 6 represents how tasks are grouped. Each category as well as subcategories (tasks) are prioritized by its importance in order to give a clear understanding for a new person what is expected to be learnt in the first place, which knowledge is crucial to gain to start working. A detailed description of tasks is presented in Appendix 2 (the information regarding organization of the training steps is confidential).

*Table 6. Categories and prioritisation of tasks*

| Status possibility | Task Priority | Category | Priority of categories |
|---|---|---|---|
| OK | 1 | ######## | 1 |
| NOK | 2 | ######## | 2 |
| | 3 | ######## | 2 |
| | | ######## | 3 |
| | | ######## | 1 |
| | | ######## | 4 |
| | | ######## | 2 |
| | | ######## | 3 |
| | | ######## | 4 |
| | | ######## | 4 |
| | | ######## | 1 |

In the end of 2022 3 employees left the company, that is why in 2023 the replacement was found. New material flow controllers were onboarded using the training template. The main difference in training procedure, which was pointed out by those who started working before 2023, is that new hires have a weekly schedule which includes information who is going to teach (experienced material flow controller), which topics will be explained during the session and time when the training will happen. Since the working environment is fast, a lot of emergent situations might happen during the process of teaching. These distractions negatively affect the training process and focus of both a trainer and a trainee on the discussed subject. The author of the thesis believes that integration of scheduled training meetings is an extremely valuable contribution towards standardisation of new hires' onboarding because during a fixed time everyone is focused only on the tasks, creating space for Questions & Answers and clarification of tasks' execution. The first coaching session was held via a video conference where fundamentals of work were explained and some of new employees recorded the session. The author of the thesis doubts if an online meeting is the best way to provide information to newcomers. It is important to understand that in the beginning of the training they are more likely to be overwhelmed with the amount of new information received. It is better to conduct face-to-face gatherings during which people can take notes at the same time as the material is presented. It is more beneficial to the training process since there is no need to rewatch recorded meetings trying to find the answers to questions a person might have, it is rather time-consuming way to get answers. According to Interviewee № 5, training template was useful because it showed who should be asked in case any questions appear regarding a specific area. Trainers were assigned those work-related topics where they have the most competence and could provide explanation of the topic to new hires.

### 4.3 Interview results – logistics manager & HR representative

In order to gain better understanding of onboarding process in the supply chain environment, author of the thesis organised interviews with logistics manager and HR representative.

HR has its role in onboarding of a new employee in the beginning of the process, beforehand the work starts. When all the required documents are collected, and a contract is signed by both parties, the link to pre onboarding is sent. It is done online, in both English and Finnish languages, and the main idea is to introduce the company to a new hire, receive basic information about the person. The procedure is the same for everyone, no matter for which position a person is chosen. Moreover, it is mandatory because without it a person cannot gain access to the company's system. Later, the manager is responsible for the onboarding, regarding the actual job. The list of tasks exists where different steps are stated, what should be done beforehand. It includes signing the employee contacts, ordering phones and computers (done by the manager). Also, a separate file "Staff induction programme" exists which should be filed by the manager and returned to Human Resources within 4 months of the start of employment. It contains general instructions how to contact Helpdesk and ServiceNow, how to use Grow & Employee Central, introduction to travelling guidelines as well as safe movement around the factory site. However, some managers might have a different template where steps are outlined in more detail.

During the interview with HR representative, the author of the thesis was introduced to a template called "Esimiehen muistilista perehdytykseen" which is translated as "Manager's checklist for induction". Interviewee claims that it still requires improvements, no strict guidelines exist for the managers how to onboard a person for the job. There should be a cooperative work between HR and managers since the former do not know the job-related details. The work of HR ends when pre-onboarding happens, and an employee receives further contact details. After that, it is the manager's responsibility to continue onboarding process. There is no evaluation of the onboarding effectiveness. However, new tools for onboarding are planned to be integrated during 2023 based on Microsoft tools. It will allow to track who has done the onboarding, create a more transparent environment.

Another interview was conducted with Logistics Manager. A person is responsible for 3 different areas. The first one is connected to production planning, where market demand is evaluated, how many machineries must be produced during the year. Production plan is set according to the market demand, since it is important to understand how many goods should be manufactured in order to avoid overproduction or, on the contrary, deficit. The second area of interviewee's responsibilities is material supply. Based on production plans it is known what parts are needed on the production lines on each day. Company's suppliers are located all over the world and the job of an interviewed team of material flow controllers is to secure deliveries of required parts to the factory. The prevention of component shortages and maintaining a balance between inventory levels are two reasons why inventory management is an essential part of the job. The last part of Logistics Manager's responsibilities is internal logistics. Leading internal logistics team includes supervision of over 100 material handlers who drive forklifts, do the picking and make sure that the production line has the parts.

Logistics Manager does not participate in training or onboarding directly. Material supply team handles the training process of new employees. Material Supply Manager reports to Logistics Manager since, as it was mentioned before, this area is one of the responsibilities of the interviewee, that is why the team, and all the processes are being supervised. The only way how the onboarding is measured is by utilization of general onboarding schedule, where topics which have been explained to a new hire are marked. Later, when the training is completed, the document is sent to HR department which tracks that all the introduction processes are done according to the plan.

## 4.4 Observed issues in supply chain department

Material flow controllers claim that environment is rather hectic and fast, different emergent situations regarding delays of components appear regularly, what makes the job stressful. People are expected to be able to work well under pressure. By analysing the collected data, it is clear that first few weeks when a person starts the job are the most intense, requiring constant help from senior employees. People are overwhelmed with information taught and explained during the day. Since the majority of interviewees joined the material supply team during different years, they had their own challenges while starting the job.

One of them was connected to the fact that no clear guidelines existed for a new person to follow, including the list of job-related tasks. There was no process, new hires had to shadow their colleagues in order to gain the knowledge and experience how to complete certain tasks. Since there was no system, a new employee had to experience “jumping” from task to task, not being able to track what have been learnt and what knowledge gap still existed. Moreover, as it was mentioned earlier, the job always came first before the training because priority was to keep the production lines going. When such situations appeared and trainer had to solve a problem, trainee, who required help or explanation, could not move further with their training. It resulted in waste of time as well as training process slowness. Thus, the moment when a person could take full responsibility for their actions was postponed. Nowadays, a list of tasks which a material flow controller has to know how to do is used for onboarding new employees. Besides, private training sessions are organised during agreed time. Such implementation aimed at improving the training system is considered to be a progress because during such coaching training is the priority and it cannot be interfered with job-related emergences.

Another issue that the author of the thesis was able to extract from carried interviews is that different people in the team have various approaches how to solve a particular problem. Various ways of explaining the material exist what can be overwhelming for a new employee who requires a standardised, accurate way to deal with a specific task. The main issue that was discussed during several interviews is related to paying attention to details. Since most of the trainings are focused on complex topics, it was highlighted that there is a lack of details provided by the trainer. The reason for this might be connected to the fact that more experienced people in the sphere omit explanations of some basics, focusing more on the discussed issue, because those fundamentals are rather straightforward and logical for a professional. However, from the trainee side it is critical to have a detailed overview of the topic in order to be able to compete the work without further support from the colleagues. Besides, it was discussed that sometimes trainers can get frustrated if explained material was not understood by the trainee. Lack of details could also be a cause why this happened in the first place. More in-depth explanations could result in work efficiency increase.

Work as a material flow controller involves processing great amount of information daily. Thus, there are various files where information is kept. It was shared with the interviewer that even senior material flow controllers sometimes struggle to find some documents or needed information to be able to complete a certain task. For a new person it is even more challenging to navigate among dozens of files. The searching gets more complicated if there are outdated files containing irrelevant information. In the following section 4.5 suggestion how to overcome this issue is provided. Interviewees notified interviewer about the existence of guidelines for some tasks. Nonetheless, when the author of the thesis asked if a person could share those files with them, interviewee could not find documents, even though they are supposed to be a support for a new hire.

The author of the thesis observed that there is rather high turnover of personnel in the supply chain department while analysing the data gathered. The issue was raised during the interview with the Logistics Manager. A person was aware of this problem. Material supply team consists of 12 people. Even though it would be wise to expand the team, thereby lowering the workload on employees, it cannot be implemented because the company is a part of corporation, and it must obey strict corporate policies. There are 2 types of work contracts in the department – temporary and permanent. Members of the team have different employment contracts. The main correlation between temporary contracts and high rotation is that some employees do not know for sure if their employment contracts will be extended or not. That is why they start looking in advance for other positions in other companies since there is no guarantee they will have the place in a team in the future. Unfortunately, most of the time it is impossible to offer extension beforehand, even though the current contract ends in a couple of months. From practice, a new contract cannot be offered earlier last weeks of the existing contract. Firstly, a permission from the corporation should be granted to extend the temporary contract. It is considered to be one of the struggles of HR policies.

While talking about training and work itself, it is essential to receive feedback from the team. There is no standardised way of giving feedback in supply chain environment. It was claimed that in the beginning of the training specific day was chosen focused on providing feedback from both parties – trainees and the manager. However, since it is not systemised, it is not done on regular basis. Feedbacks should be collected and analysed not only when new people join the team but also during the working process and when they leave the company. It was discussed that it is not common to provide a reflection and share thoughts on the working issue in the team unless they are directly asked. Most of the team members rely on each other, that a specific issue will be raised by another person. When a person leaves the company, they are asked to give feedback by HR. However, they are not shared with supply chain managers, so information cannot be analysed.

## 4.5 Suggestions for the process improvement

One of the already described difficulties material flow controllers have is connected to the amount of information that should be processed daily. A great number of files are kept in the system which are required to complete work-related tasks. Currently, if a particular file or document needs to be found, the location in the system is usually asked from co-workers. There is a shared folder accessible for all material flow controllers which consists of numerous subfolders where information regarding different tasks is located. Each subfolder contains more specific files. It might be rather overwhelming for a new employee, who is having their training period, to easily navigate among dozens of files, for example, those storing information about transportation transit time, KPI related to actual dates from suppliers, change management, etc. Implementation of roadmapping can optimise the searching process, visualising the step by step way how to find a particular file. It should not be hard to follow, basic Excel sheet will be enough to ease one's searching. As an example, Table 7 represents roadmapping, how to find files related to Training schedule and New supplier setup instructions on the personal computer of the thesis writer.

*Table 7. Roadmapping example*

| Files | Roadmapping |
|---|---|
| Training schedule | /Users/anastasia/Documents/thesis/Company X |
| New supplier setup | /Users/anastasia/Documents/thesis/Company X |

Following the same logic, paths how to locate the most important files for a newcomer can be added in the table that should be easily accessible. Data can be also merged from several workbooks. Workbooks from different users or departments can be linked, and the relevant data can subsequently be incorporated into a summary workbook. This would allow to avoid manual alteration of the summary document if the source workbooks change this way. It is not wise to create paths for every document existing since the idea of the search simplification will be irrelevant. However, such files as instructions should be included in the table.

Moreover, files accessible to the team should be reviewed for their relevance. Meaning that there are documents and folders which are not up to date anymore, creating visual and informational clutter. Thus, it is harder not only for new employees but also for senior ones to easily navigate. Sorting the folders in the system improves employee visibility and facilitates access to work-related resources.

When the training process begins, training schedule is arranged.  Graphs contain information regarding the topic taught, its category, assigned trainer from the material supply team, if the training was completed or not, when it was scheduled and the actual date of completeness. Some of the trainers use Microsoft tools where they share the screen during a video conference and show how a particular task is done. The author of the thesis suggests excluding this method of instruction due to low efficiency and focus on face-to-face teaching. In case a person has to find information about a specific topic, they must watch recorded session, trying to find the exact moment in the video where it was explained. Notes which are taken during the personal teaching are more practical and quicker to navigate through.

During one of the held interviews, it was shared that the order of some taught tasks is illogical. In this situation human factor might be the issue. When a person has time, they want to conduct the training, explaining some tasks they are responsible for teaching. However, the main focus must be on the right, standardised order of the tasks' explanation. There should not be a situation when some basic tasks are not yet fully outlined but the next topic is already discussed. Author of the thesis compared two documents – Standard tasks training template, where all the tasks are marked by their priority, and Standard tasks training schedule which is currently in use. Both documents (Appendix 2 and Appendix 3) are not available in the public version as they contain confidential information of the case company. According to the first document tasks that get 1$^{st}$ priority are General, Standard tasks and ERP system. 2$^{nd}$ priority categories are central online platform for supplier data, online platform for forecast release and Microsoft tool. Table 8 represents 1$^{st}$ and 2$^{nd}$ priority of categories which were scheduled for the training. There is a contradiction in the table which can be seen as the wrong order of the categories – central online platform for supplier data specifically. As it was shown in the Table 6. Categories and prioritisation of tasks, central online platform for supplier data refers to the 2$^{nd}$ priority while current ERP system is the 1$^{st}$ priority category. According to the weekly schedule central online platform for supplier data is supposed to be taught during Week 5, a few weeks later than it is taught in reality.

The reason for this might be the above discussed situation when a trainer has time, they explain topics which they are responsible for, not following the plan. Another explanation might require reconsideration of the priority list, perhaps it is valuable to cover central online platform for supplier data at the same time as other 1st priority categories.

*Table 8. Training schedule 1st and 2nd priority of categories*

The content has been omitted due to confidentiality reasons.

In either case, this creates confusion for the trainee, as it is essential to know the fundamentals first and based on that knowledge continue with more complicated tasks. The organisation of a fixed and logically structured order of tasks ought to be discussed in the team since professionals with experience know all specifics of the work. Based on internal opinions and feedbacks, there should be reorganisation of tasks, which will bring consistency into tasks teaching.

An issue of hectic working environment was covered during several interviews. Since securing availability of serial parts for the production line is the top priority for the team, trainings might be interrupted by emergency situations. Such situations badly influence the training process, especially when complex topics are explained. A trainer might lose the point where the training was left, during which something urgent came up. In order to overcome it, author of the thesis suggests a guideline for trainers. The idea is the creation of a handbook where each task that requires face-to-face explanation will be described in bullet points, stating what aspects must be covered during the training of a new employee. Implementation of it will be beneficial for both parties – trainer and trainee. Former would be able to track where the training was stopped and continue it relying on the information written in a guiding document. Later would be given an opportunity to receive a standardised training, since based on created handbook all the trainers could have the same understanding what aspects in the topic ought to be discussed. This would also improve the issue with different trainers' approaches and the amount of details explained. As it was mentioned in the section 4.4, various material flow controllers have their own way of describing work-related topics. Since some of them have a significant working experience in the field, they might unintentionally omit simple but important for understanding elements, considering them rather clear and straightforward. However, a new person might not know them and so it creates knowledge gap.  The likelihood of overlooking details is decreased when there is a standardised list of items that must be covered for each task. It can help trainers stay focused and ensure that no valuable information is missed, bridging potential knowledge gaps.

Creation of handbook for trainees regarding tasks description and the meaning (what the topic means and what is the general idea of the task) can bring a valuable contribution to the training process. Before asking co-workers for help, a person should understand first what he or she is dealing with. A file where terminology is written down can be one of the suggestions aimed to support personal learning.

The importance of feedback was highlighted multiple times during the research. Feedback mechanism provides an opportunity for both trainers and trainees to share their thoughts regarding the training process as well as the work performance. Feedback should be given to new employees on a regular basis, pointing out both achievements and aspects that require further improvements. Organizations can enhance worker performance, boost job satisfaction, and encourage engagement with the support of employee feedback methods. There are several feedback mechanisms which can be implemented into company's routine.

1. A sort of employee feedback system called a performance evaluation rates an employee's job performance in relation to predetermined standards including duties, goals, and

objectives. Annual performance reviews are the norm, although they can also be done quarterly or twice a year. Unresolved performance concerns result in decreased productivity, low department motivation, and, in the end, more time and effort being expended on problems that could have been resolved by frequent evaluation methods (Medicine, n.d.). It can be also applicable in case of training process, since new knowledge is gained weekly, performance review should be given to an employee based on achievements at work as well as trainers feedback on the learning progress.

2. Employee feedback method called 360-degree feedback comprises gathering feedback from colleagues, managers, and subordinates among other people. The input is then used to identify areas for growth and areas for strength, and it aids employees in understanding how others view them inside the company. In order to make the method work, feedback must be gathered as much as possible about new employee's performance, usually through a survey. Information can be provided by trainers, who are responsible for teaching during a scheduled period of time (Join, 2022). Self-evaluation is also considered as a valuable part of the process. The benefit of this feedback mechanism is that the evaluation is not done by the supervisor, but by the numerous stakeholders who might interreact with a person more often, keeping track on new hire’s actions and duties. The method brings more objectivism to the assessment.

By implementing a regular feedback system both new employee and the team benefit. The former has an opportunity to share their thoughts what aspects of the job should be reconsidered, for example, the change of the trainer because of a poor ability to explain the task. At the same time, the later can give honest anonymous feedback of the work of an employee, highlighting which topics require more practice or additional explanation. Some people might not feel comfortable telling their opinions outload, fearing disapproval or possible future problems and misunderstandings with colleagues. Anonymity in surveys can motivate people to share their thoughts.

When the training of a new employee is done, it is crucial to evaluate the effectiveness of the training process. Measuring training performance has been considered to be a crucial technique for increasing employee engagement and retention in addition to improving skills and expertise. According to Eshna Verma (2023) The Kirkpatrick Evaluation Model is one of the best approaches for assessing the efficacy of specially designed corporate training courses which consists of 4 levels.

1. Reaction (1st level) focuses on how individuals have responded to the instructions, its practicality and value. Throughout this phase, in order to collect information questionnaires or a simple conversation can be used to gain knowledge regarding personal learning experience of a new employee, preferably during the post-training period. The following questions could be asked, such as: Was the training material understandable and pertinent? If the pace and educational preferences of the employee were accommodated during the training? The main idea is to emphasis on employee’s outcomes, evaluating categories as program objectives, materials provided and its applicability, as well as trainers’ knowledge and their ability to share it. Besides, such Key Performance Indicator (KPI) as Net Promoter Score (NPS) can be utilised for measuring. More information regarding KPI can be found in the section 2.2.
2. 2nd level (Learning) evaluates participant's learning depending on whether they gain the desired knowledge, abilities, and understanding. Exams, assessments in the form of interviews, including supervisor feedback, are some of the assessment methods. At this point in the review process, it is possible to ascertain whether the training is accomplishing its intended goals, which abilities can be acquired through the training, and the potential for the material and delivery method enhancements.
3. The 3rd level in the Kirkpatrick Evaluation Model is called Behaviour. It is mostly focused on evaluation how the training affected employee’s output and accomplishments. Insufficient behavioural change might not indicate bad training, but rather that the company's present procedures and cultural norms may not promote the best conditions for learning. Self-assessment questionnaires, on-the-job examination, structural feedback from colleagues is used as methods of assessment. Question, as how confident would you be instructing another individual in your obtained expertise and skills, can be asked from the employee.  Moreover, Employee engagement KPI is applicable. More information regarding KPI can be found in the section 2.2.
4. The final level is focused on measuring tangible outcomes of the training process. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) can be applied during this phase, evaluating higher return on investments (ROI), employee retention, increased productivity, average time to completion of the training. More information regarding KPIs can be found in the

section 2.2. Managers may be questioned to learn whether they believe their staff has produced work that is notably more efficient or of greater quality as a result of the training (Jay, n.d.).

By following the model both the company and employees are able to get insights regarding the trainings as well as performance. Regular updates and feedbacks allow the organisation to maintain alignment between the training process and evolving business demands.

# 5 Discussion and conclusions

In the last chapter the research questions based on the examined literature and the findings of the data collection and analysis are addressed. Additionally, the restrictions that the author established for the study's clarity as well as suggestions for further research are taken into consideration.

## 5.1 Answers to research questions

The following research questions, stated in the beginning of research are answered based on the literature review, analysis of data collected during interviews as well as documents provided by the case company:

**RQ1: What is the current training process in company X supply chain environment?**

Training process of the case company has been reviewed starting from 2016 to 2023. Significant improvements have been made over the stated period of time. It is important to point out that current employees remark that the workplace is chaotic and that the job is difficult due to various emergent scenarios involving component delays that frequently occur. Personnel are expected to perform effectively under pressure, and the first few weeks of a job are the most demanding and necessitate regular assistance from senior colleagues. Nowadays the training process of new material flow controllers in the supply chain department is based on the document called Standard tasks training template. A weekly schedule for the training process lists the knowledgeable material flow controller who will lead the session, the subjects that will be covered, and the time that the training will take place. However, interruptions that may occur during the training sessions could harm the training process and the trainees' and trainers' concentration on the material. The training template was deemed helpful because it listed specific topics assigned to trainers based on their expertise, who could explain them to new hires. The template also indicated whom to contact in case of inquiries connected to daily tasks. Some of the new hires recorded the initial training sessions, which were held using Microsoft tool and covered the basics of the job. The thesis's author, however, has concerns regarding how well online meetings organised in Microsoft tool can inform newbies, particularly in the early stages when they are most likely overwhelmed by the volume of novel information they are receiving.

According to the information received, there are issues with standardization, accuracy, and attention to details in the present onboarding procedure of a case company. A new employee who needs a standardized, accurate method of doing a certain task may find it daunting because different team members have varied approaches to solving a given problem and diverse ways of explaining the content. Given that the majority of training sessions are devoted to complicated subjects and the trainers might unintentionally miss sufficient details during an explanation, the lack of attention to detail was brought up as an important issue during interviews. Experts may overlook certain basic explanations in favour of concentrating more on the topic at hand. To be able to finish the task without additional help from co-workers, a trainee must have a thorough understanding of the subject, nevertheless.

One of the challenges that material flow controllers confront is the volume of information that must be processed on a daily basis, which can be intimidating for newly hired employees. The present way for locating files and documents in the shared folder accessible to all material flow controllers is mostly done by asking available co-workers for the location of needed file. For new employees who continue undergoing training, this might be time-consuming, too dependable on others.

All in all, a lot has been done in terms of training process improvement if one can compare the current onboarding with how a new employee was familiarised with work a few years ago. More information regarding the training process development is described in section 4.2.

**RQ2: From the educational perspective - what approaches exist and which suit company X the best?**

During the research 4 approaches were considered using external sources: Traditional On-the-job training (OJT), Hands-On Training (HOT), Mentoring and Employee-led training system (ELT). The author of the thesis concludes that a combination of mentoring and ELT is the most effective strategy for the case company after evaluating various methods and taking into consideration the particulars regarding the way material flow controllers operate. With this strategy, new hires interact with experienced staff members who serve as mentors. They help new hires learn how to operate and improve their abilities by offering direction, encouragement, and feedback. The method develops a more inclusive and interactive educational environment. The work in the organisation is highly company-oriented, where external trainers will not be effective since they most definitely lack knowledge of the specifics required for the job. Thus, employees who are knowledgeable in the field can educate their colleagues by sharing their insights and experiences, which can increase interest in learning and foster a deeper understanding of the subject. It is crucial to make sure the training program is in line with the aims and objectives of the company and that it is reviewed for effectiveness.

**RQ3: How the training of new employees can be standardised and improved easing the integration to the working environment?**

According to the results obtained through training material evaluation and personal experiences of employees, there are ways to improve current training process held in the case company. They can be divided into the following categories:

1. Internal system structuration

Implementing roadmapping can improve the search process of needed documents and make it easier to integrate new personnel. The roadmapping approach should consist of a step-by-step guide that instructs new employees on how to locate specific files and documents. This can be accomplished via creating a simple Excel document outlining the actions to take. By simplifying the roadmapping process, new employees will save time and minimize frustration by effortlessly navigating among dozens of files. This would additionally guarantee that all employees have access to the relevant information, making work-related tasks easier to execute. In order to make roadmapping more efficient and increase visibility, current folders and files stored in them should be sorted, and in case of outdated documents deleted.

The incoherent sequencing of some tasks during training is one of the difficulties encountered. To overcome this challenge, it is crucial to set up an agreed-upon and rationally structured order of tasks that must be completed throughout training. The team should discuss and decide on this sequence because specialists with expertise are aware of all the particulars of the work. A task reorganization can be done to offer consistency to task teaching by gathering internal opinions and feedback. The correct, consistent order of task outline, where fundamental tasks are completely explained before proceeding to the next issue, should be prioritized during task restructuring. The emphasis should be on delivering a structured orientation program that is simple for new hires to understand and follow.

2. Guidelines creation

As it was discussed in the section 4.5, when a trainer gets distracted by important matters during training, it can be difficult to remember where the training was left off. The author of the thesis advises developing a manual that lists each activity requiring face-to-face instruction in bullet points as a solution to this problem. A systematic approach to training would be ensured by using this manual to direct trainers on the topics that must be addressed throughout the training of a new employee. Both trainers and trainees would gain from the use of this handbook. The likelihood that important material would be missed would be reduced since trainers would be able to determine where the training stopped and proceed based on the information provided in the handbook. Because all instructors would share a same knowledge of the key elements of each topic that should be covered during training, trainees would obtain a uniform training experience. This would also assist to address the problem of several trainers using various methods and leaving out crucial information, which may result in knowledge gaps. Additionally, in order to support self-learning of new employees, a document containing terminology regarding the tasks should be developed. This would positively result in new hires basic knowledge of the topics which they will face during the work or training.

3. Feedback mechanism implementation

Case company may implement feedback methods to offer routine assessments of employee performance and work-related development. Performance reviews and 360-degree feedback are two examples of feedback mechanisms that can be applied. By giving an employee regular performance assessment based on their workplace accomplishments and trainer comments on their learning progress, the former feedback system may be applied to the training process, where novel information is acquired on a weekly basis. This will make sure the employee is following the schedule and highlight areas that require additional practice, which will raise efficiency as well as satisfaction with work. Another employee feedback method is called 360-degree feedback, which includes feedback from co-workers and managers. Employees can utilize this feedback to learn about their strengths and areas for improvement while also learning how others in the organization perceive them. The success of the training process may be evaluated using this feedback mechanism, which can also assist trainers in identifying areas where new hires might require more assistance. Self-evaluation is regarded as an important step in the process as well. The advantage of this feedback mechanism is that the assessment is performed by the numerous stakeholders who may interact with a person more frequently, keeping track of the recent hire's actions and responsibilities, rather than the supervisor.

4. Training performance measurement

It is essential to assess the training process' efficiency. In the section 4.5 the Kirkpatrick Evaluation Model was suggested for implementation into company’s routine. The main idea of the model is to apply 4 level approach, concentrating on how people responded to the instructions, their usefulness, and value, assessing participants' learning based on whether they acquire the needed skills, knowledge, and understanding, measuring the training process's practical outcomes and how the training affects employees' production and successes. Various KPIs, surveys, on-the-job evaluation, co-workers’ feedback and self-assessment questionnaires are the methods how effectively measure training performance. Regular updates and comments encourage continual improvement, enabling the organization to keep the training process in line with changing business priorities.

## 5.2 Limitations of the research

The author's role as an observer was one of the constraints of the research done on the training process within the organization. Personal experience could not, therefore, be considered during the investigation. Instead, the author only considered the first-hand accounts of present employees.  Additionally, the empirical approach of information gathering, which involved observation of the current training process and conducted interviews, can also have its drawbacks. It cannot give the whole picture of the discussed issue since no personal author’s experience was considered. However, using observation has the benefit of encouraging objectivity. The author may report what they observed objectively without being affected by personal prejudices.

Although the perspectives of the employees, who have been interviewed, are based on their personal experiences and can offer insightful information about the company's training program, this method is not without limitations. Since every staff member's experience is personal and can be influenced by their own circumstances, attitudes, and feelings the human factor could add bias into the research.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of the training program may not always line up with the personnel subjective assessments. Based on their particular preferences, an employee might have a favourable opinion of the training program, but this might not be a true representation of the success of the program as a whole.

## 5.3 Directions for future research

For new hires to successfully transition into the organization and fulfil their tasks, the training process is essential. Current research has enhanced an understanding of the training process, but there are still several issues that could be addressed.

Comparing on-the-job training with other training approaches, such as e-learning, is one area for future research. In terms of retention of knowledge, involvement, and general efficacy, it would be instructive to compare the performance of these novel methods to more established ones.

Additionally, it is feasible to look into how technology is applied to new hire training. Along with the rise of remote work, technology use in training has become more common. One area for investigation may be the effectiveness of technology-based training and the best ways to include it in the training process.

Investigating the long-term effects of the training process on new hire retention rates and career development is another area for future research. Successful training can assist new hires in settling into their roles, but it is also crucial to maintain their long-term engagement and motivation. A more efficient training program can be developed that positions employees for long-term success by researching the link between a good training process and career advancement.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1. Interview questions

**Material flow controllers:**

1. What is your role in the company? What are your main responsibilities?
2. Have you already had working experience in the field?
3. How was your onboarding held?
4. Did you receive any files/documents regarding company's values in advance? Was there anything at all?
5. Who was responsible for your onboarding? HR representative/ manager/ both?
6. Did you receive any support from your coworkers?
7. What was the most confusing/challenging in your training/onboarding?
8. For how long did your training last?
9. What in your opinion was missing in the process? What could have been done better?
10. Have you been asked to provide feedback about your training/onboarding processes?
11. How can you evaluate your training?

**HR representative:**

1. What part do you have in the onboarding process of a new employee?
2. What is required for employee onboarding?
3. Is there a pre-onboarding? Access to some information regarding the company, its' values, goals, corporate rules that all employees must follow?
4. How do you ensure employees are onboarded effectively?

**Logistics manager:**

1. Can you please tell me about your job? What are the main responsibilities of yours?
2. Do you participate in the onboarding or training procedures? Does anyone report to you about a new employee's integration to the working environment?
3. Is the onboarding process measured? If yes, what are the KPIs?
4. What's in your opinion the hardest for a new employee regarding work? Does company provide support?
5. What's in your opinion the best way to train newcomers? Do you know about how the training is held?
6. Are instructors trained to be able to provide decent training? Some external so-called "train-the-trainer" seminars?

## Appendix 2. Standard tasks training template

The content has been omitted due to confidentiality reasons.

The content has been omitted due to confidentiality reasons.

The content has been omitted due to confidentiality reasons.

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## Appendix 3. Standard tasks training schedule

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