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Competence Development of Freelance Trainers

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Abstract

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The purpose of this thesis is to produce a plan for Company X to develop and ensure the needed competence of their trainers. Previous literature was used as a base to formulate the plan. Competence development consist of three stages: identification of competence, competence evaluation and actions to develop the competence. The company has already evaluated and identified that the competence they would like to develop and ensure is the trainer's presentation skills. One of the ways to ensure the needed competence in a company is to invest in the personnel's competence development. This can be done by offering activities such as onboarding, personal development planning, mentoring and planned training. The effectiveness of competence development is increased by combining these different methods of learning. In this thesis, onboarding, planned training and feedback will be examined as the methods to develop competence. Based on earlier literature and research a plan consisting of these three different methods was formulated. The onboarding phase ensures that the trainers are aware of what is expected of them in order for them to confidently hold the training. The training phase is an optional training offered to the trainers providing them the chance to develop their competence as presenters. Having a formal feedback system ensures that the trainers get feedback on their trainings, both from the company and the customers which will help in developing the specific competence areas.

Keywords: Competence development, human resources, training, onboarding, feedback

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1 Introduction

1.1 Thesis Topic

Organisations in the past have found it challenging to match staff competence development practices with the needed skills (Hätönen, 2011). In this thesis, the objective is to match the right development competence practices with the needed skills of the case company.

The case company offers online courses for business professionals on their own platform. Most of the courses are recorded in a studio without live audience or participants. The company utilises freelance trainers whose backgrounds differ greatly thus also their presentation skills may vary greatly (Company X, 2022). To ensure the quality of their core product the company wants to ensure and develop the trainer's presentation skills. The goal of this thesis is to find a way to ensure and develop the competences of the trainers in the company's network while also making the co-operation more beneficial for both parties. The result of the thesis aims to be a recommended action plan for Company X to reach their objective.

This thesis is split into four parts. This first part discusses the thesis topic and the research methods used. The second part reviews previous literature and research written on competence development and constructive feedback giving. This part is confidential. It has been moved to the appendix and is not included in the public version; the third part analyses Company X by combining the findings made in the literature review with the information about Company X: lastly the fourth part concludes the research by gathering a recommended action plan for Company X. The thesis is focused on compiling an action plan for ensuring the needed competence of trainers in Company X.

1.2 Research Methods

This thesis will be based on earlier literature. It will be executed by reviewing earlier literature and by applying that information to compile a recommended plan of action for Company X. Descriptive literature review will be conducted to support the construction of the plan of action. Descriptive literature review can be described as an overview of a subject without strict and precise rules. The materials used are extensive and the choice of material is not limited by methodological rules. The descriptive literature review typically reviews published scientific studies and focuses on peer-reviewed studies (Snyder, 2019).

Data was collected from scientific databases and academic libraries both electronically and in print. Both Finnish and English sources were used while writing this thesis. The information search was limited to research articles and books where the full text was available. The research conducted in the subjects is vast and the aim was to use only peer-reviewed and sources that have been cited elsewhere as well to ensure the reliability of the information.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Important concepts and definitions

First, some important concepts related to the subject will be reviewed. Since the objective of this thesis is to compile an action plan for ensuring the needed competence of trainers in Company X, the most important concepts to be defined are competence and competence development, as well as motivation which is closely linked to competence development and learning. Also, presentation skills will be defined and elaborated further since that is the main competence the company is aiming to develop with their trainers.

2.1.1 Competence

Competence can be defined as using the knowledge and skills acquired through study and experience in practice. Competence does not include only having the knowledge, but also active and dynamic knowing where the knowledge and its application combine. Knowledge and skills are used in practice in social situations, in an organization, in a work group or with family, where the feedback for the competence will be coming from that reference group (Raivola & Vuorensyrjä, 1998: 13).

Competence combines the diverse and creative use of knowledge and skills, thinking skills, the ability to organise work and work in a team, learning skills, the ability to be flexible and adapt to change, and the ability to assess one's own skills and activities while also developing them (Hätönen, 2011: 9). It is important for an organisation to recognise its competence. It needs to be examined, what type of competence is needed now or in the future while also evaluating what competence is already in the company. Only after defining these will it be possible to take the necessary actions (Viitala, 2005.) This process can be seen in figure 1.

Figure 1: Process of Competence Development (Viitala, 2005: 87)

The prerequisite for directing and developing competence is breaking down the existing competence and defining the competence needed. It is important to

define the current and the needed competence in the company, not only to help review and develop the competence, but also for the individual or the group to be able to identify their own competence, strengths and improvement areas (Viitala, 2005: 87)

2.1.2 Competence Development

Competence development refers to systematically developing employees' competence and professional knowledge to meet the organisation's needs. In other words, the objective of competence development is for the employees' competences to meet the organisation's competence needs. The main point is to develop the right competences the company, meaning the competences that make the company successful and competitive. Competences can be developed in different methods and ways (Hätönen, 2011).

There are different methods of developing and ensuring the needed competence in a company. Viitala (2005: 87) has roughly divided these methods into the following categories:

- Competence development – investing in personnel's competence development
- Buying competence – buying a company or a part of it that has the needed competence; recruiting new competent people to the company
- Loaning competence – buying services from another company, using the JIT-principle (e.g. consultants and partners)
- Committing employees who are valuable now and in the future to the company
- Moving useless and expired competence away from the company

In this thesis, investing in personnel's competence development is the main focus. Learning and competence development can be enhanced in the workplace by activities such as onboarding, personal development planning, mentoring and planned training. The effectiveness of competence development

is increased by combining these different methods of learning. In the later sections onboarding, planned training and providing systematic feedback will be examined further as methods of ensuring and developing competence.

2.1.3 Motivation

Motivation can be divided into two types: intrinsic and extrinsic. In extrinsic motivation, what one does is motivated by outer rewards, such as money or other prices. In intrinsic motivation, what one does is already a reward itself. The person is ready and willing to perform the task regardless of any outer rewards. Child's play or adult's hobbies are examples of activities guided by intrinsic motivation. In general, all tasks or work that the individual feels fascinated, interested or inspired by is guided by intrinsic motivation.

Although in the working life, everyone has moments of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, in most cases either of them is the dominant one. Meaning that although there is usually an outer motivator, such as salary, involved in most work, it does not imply that one cannot be excited and interested, thus intrinsically motivated about their work. Intrinsic motivation links closely to competence development and competence management. As will be concluded later in section 2.3. to manage competence development in organisations, the organisation has to locate the skills required by a common goal and then manage to learn it appropriately. Meaning organisational learning is more than individual learning, it is the organisation's ability to connect individuals to learning to reach the common goals. In theory, this could be done ignoring the individual's intrinsic motivation but as people learn better when interested in the subject and motivated to learn it, competence development is more effective if individual's intrinsic motivation is considered (Jarenko & Martela, 2014).

2.1.4 Presentation Skills

In general, presentation skills can be defined as appropriate communication behaviour in a particular current presentation situation. Presentation skills are influenced by the speaker's knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The speaker's

knowledge of the specific presentation subject and the situation, as well as its' purpose and objectives affect the presentation. Influencing factors are also, not situation-specific aspects like knowledge and experience of different presenting situations, ways of structuring one's speech and methods of justifying information. Skills related factors influencing presentation skills are skills related to the speaker's attitudes such as consideration and appreciation of audience, as well as the speaker's motivation related skills such as desire to speak and interest and enthusiasm. Influencing aspects are also skills related to the content of the presentation such as selecting and structuring the right information and adapting the right presentation tools in relation to the content. Important to acknowledge are also skills related to presenting such as verbal and non-verbal communication, targeting and taking contact to the participants and illustrating and influencing in the right manner. Attitudes towards the presented subject, oneself and to the participants influence also influence how effective the presentation or training is (Jyväskylän yliopiston kielikeskus, n.d.)

Presentation skills can be divided into different groups to better separate the specific skills. Here the skills have been divided into six categories: interaction skills, building a presentation, content of the presentation, presenting style, performance anxiety and appearance. Below, some examples of skills in each category can be found.

- **Interaction skills:** inducing and maintaining listening motivation, building the content according to the participants, asking questions from the participants to activate them, responding to the nonverbal and verbal messages of the participants and allowing them to influence the progress of the presentation

- **Building a presentation:** choosing a topic or perspective interesting to the participants, limiting and scaling the presentation according to the situation, time and objective, structuring the presentation by starting it interestingly and ending it in a conclusion

- **Content of the presentation:** choosing the content with a reason, highlighting significant aspects, justifying opinions and arguments in a credible and sufficiently comprehensive manner, illustrating the presentation by using different non-verbal, verbal and visualising methods

- **Presenting style:** using accurate, comprehensible and expressive language, using one's voice appropriately, using appropriate non-verbal communication

- **Performance anxiety:** accepting performance anxiety, identifying how performance anxiety manifests, perceiving performance anxiety as a resource, coping with performance anxiety

- **Appearance:** displaying interest in the topic, considering the role of external appearance in creating impressions, considering the role of non-verbal communication in creating impressions, considering the role of using different types of visualising methods in creating impressions

Dividing presentation skills into these categories and practical skills inside of them helps in practising and improving overall presentation skills. By breaking them into smaller categories, the specific skills can easier be assessed. It also allows better more specific and concrete feedback to be provided on the specific areas of presentation skills. To improve one's presentation skills, it is important to receive as accurate and concrete feedback as possible. By acknowledging these different categories and the skills inside of them it can be identified which specific skills the person already possesses, and which ones need more practicing (Jyväskylän yliopiston kielikeskus, n.d.)

2.2 Onboarding

Employee onboarding is the process through which companies engage new employees into the company and in their role. This is made to ensure that the employees know what is expected and to make it easier for them to integrate

into their new work and to make them productive contributors in the company in the least time possible. Onboarding can be distinguished into two complementary components: General onboarding and role-specific onboarding. General onboarding introduces the company and its history, vision, mission, and values, as well as overall policies, procedures. Role-specific orientation is tailored for each position in the company. This helps the new employee learn and understand the competences needed to perform the work at the expected level (Dávila & Piña-Ramírez, 2018).

The purpose of a workplace is to produce a product or service for which the company has been founded for. The customers, the company and the employees all benefit from the staff being properly trained. Onboarding is meant to help the new employee to learn and to integrate into the workplace. This also increases the quality and the smoothness of the service, when the staff is properly trained and professional (Mäntynen & Penttinen, 2009.) The Finnish Centre of Occupational Safety has some benefits of a proper onboarding process:

- More effective learning and the learning time decreases
- Positive attitude towards the job and the work community increases the commitment to the work
- A positive company image is created to the employee and the customers
- Mistakes and the time to correct them decreases
- Absences and employee turnover decreases

In short-time employment, it is appropriate to only include the necessary information about the employment in the onboarding. In cases of outsourcing, the subcontractor or freelancer must be provided with adequate onboarding of the company and the place of the outsourced task in the supply chain. In addition to this information the role-specific onboarding and important matters

about the cooperation should be presented if needed (Lahti University of Applied Sciences, 2007).

The objective of onboarding in organisations is usually more than just fulfilling the work safety requirements, the goal is also often to commit the new employee to the workplace already from the beginning. However, as short-term and part-time work have become more common, the objective of onboarding in many organisations might be fast on-the-job learning or managing the routine tasks. Whereas in organisations where longer commitment is desired and they are committed to invest in long-term competence development, the goals of the onboarding process will most likely be different. All organisations should consider themselves, what is the objective of their onboarding process. The objectives can be long-term aiming for many years commitment or short-term for example fast growth in productivity. Depending on the objectives of the organisation and the task the onboarding goals emphasize quick on-the-job training, strengthening the company culture, effective teamwork, independent working or strong ability to take responsibility for example (Eklund, 2018: 28-29).

Once the objectives of the onboarding have been established, an effective plan is needed to achieve them. Often the planning starts on the basis of an already existing process and in those situations, it should be considered how to make the process more effective. The organisation should not be afraid to make changes to an onboarding process found ineffective. While planning an onboarding process the following aspects should be considered: what the information should it include, who is responsible for which part, when, how and in which order these aspects should be gone through and who is the person being onboarded (Eklund, 2018: 76). This process can be seen on figure 2.

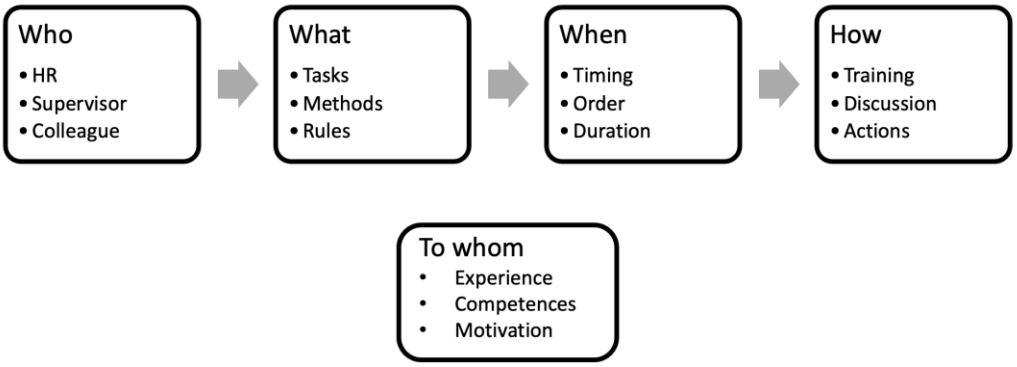

Figure 2: Aspects to consider when planning the onboarding process (Eklund, 2018: 76)

Who refers to the person responsible for instructing the new employee in the specific task. It can be an HR-representative, a supervisor or another employee instructing the certain task. What refers to the information included in the onboarding, these can be for example tasks, rules, methods, systems, equipment or machines. All the information forms the body of the onboarding process. When refers to the timeline of the process and the duration of each stage. The timeline should not be too strict since the possibility of changes occurring is high. How refers to the practical implementation of the process. There are endless possibilities of implementation, which of the most common are joint training sessions and on-the-job training. Some information is better adopted by having a discussion and some can be independently studied by watching a video or by reading a booklet. To whom refers to who the onboarding is aimed at meaning how are the different attributes of each new employee taken into consideration in the onboarding process. The onboarding plan should be flexible in a way that it allows for changes when needed. The plan should be personally revised during the process to fit the specific person and their needs (Eklund, 28: 76-79).

2.3 Training

Training refers to the process of providing employees with the competences required to excel their current jobs (Gowan & Lepak 2010: 224). Training is the use of systematic and planned instruction activities to promote learning. It is only one of the ways to ensure that the learning process happens, but it can be the justified method in the following circumstances; if the knowledge or skills cannot be learned in the workplace or by self-directed learning, there is a number of people requiring different skills, that have to be developed quickly to meet new demands and which cannot be gained relying on experience, people are unlikely to master the skills on their own at a reasonable speed because the tasks carried out are so specialized and/or when the learning need is common to a number of people and it can be dealt with in a training programme or event (e.g. induction, essential IT skills, communication skills). Training should be systematic meaning it has to be specifically planned, designed and implemented to serve to the certain needs. This includes that the training has to be provided by people who know how to train, and the training needs to be evaluated (Armstrong & Taylor 2014: 308-309).

Stanley C. Ross (2019) describes training as process focused. Training represents a process which has a start and an end with stages between these points. The duration of the entire training program and its stages may vary but creating a training always includes creating a process. This means that the information is systematically segmented into narrower pieces to help the learner internalize the information. The more complex the information and the subject, the smaller pieces the information should be segmented into. Thus, the narrower the stages of the training program should be. The goal in designing any training is to maximise learning and narrower focus will help in achieving that.

Training is an enabling activity meaning it enables the individual to perform more effectively in their work. Assuming that the employees want to succeed in their work and want to contribute to the success of the company. Training is the

primary activity used to help individuals succeed in their work and contribute to the success of the company (Ross, 2019: 4). It cannot however overcome problems in motivation. Some employees might have the competences that the training aims to develop but due to lack in motivation they are not utilizing them in their work. In these situations, training might not be the desired route to change their behaviour (Gowan & Lepak, 2010: 224).

By giving employees the opportunity to develop themselves and by assisting employees to become successful contributors to the community, the employees become more committed to the organisation. The bond and loyalty between the individual and the organisation strengthen as they both benefit from actions each other's actions. The result of this will be mutual support which will continue and evolve as long as both parties provide to maintain the loyalty. the responsibility to do so, lies heavily on the organisation since it has the capability to do more than the organisation (Ross, 2019: 4).

Designing an effective training process consists of four parts: identification of needed competence, design, implementation and evaluation. This can process can be seen on figure 3. Identification of competence was briefly discussed in section 2.1.1. Competence, in the following the other parts of the process will be further discussed.

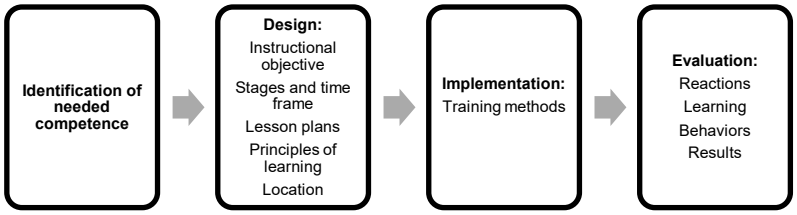

Figure 3: Process of designing a training program (Gowan & Lepak, 2010: 225 and Ross, 2019)

2.3.1 Design

Once the competence identification has been done to identify where the training is needed, the training needs to be properly designed for it to be effective and serve its purpose (Gowan & Lewak, 2010: 228). The training program must meet the needs, requirements and expectations of the organisation and the participant, this needs to be ensured by not only identifying the needed competence also designing the training program to fit the needs. Following a training program model ensures that all the critical elements are included in the design (Ross, 2019: 6). Effectively designing a training program includes at least the following elements: establishing the instructional objectives, establishing the different stages and their time frame as well as choosing the topics and developing lesson plans and incorporating principles of learning in them (Gowan & Lewak, 2010; Ross, 2019).

Instructional objectives drive the design of the program by describing what is to be accomplished in the training program. These objectives should be linked to the goals of the organisation and presented to the participants for them to understand what they should learn from the training and how they can utilise it in their work. While planning the instructional objectives, the following aspects should be considered: who is the target audience, what is the level the training is targeted to and what the participants should learn during the training.

After the instructional objectives of the whole training have been established, next will be the planning of the different stages and their time frame. The designer should have at least an approximate of the number of stages included in the training and how much time each of the stages will last. This should tie together with developing the lesson plans for the stages since time sets the frame on which subjects to focus on and how the stages can be planned (Ross, 2019.) Whereas instructional objectives guide the direction of the whole training program, lesson plans provide a plan for each session or stage of the program. It should include what will be covered, who will cover it, how the material will be taught and where it will be taught (Gowan & Lepak, 2010.)

Incorporating principles of learning into the training program will make it more effective. In the following some principles of learning related to learning styles will be discussed further. Different learning styles affect how people best learn and one of the most common ways to categorise the different learners are auditory, visual, tactile and kinaesthetic Incorporating all these learning styles will reduce the frustration of the participants with different styles and increase the learning results (Gowan & Lewak, 2010: 229). Auditory learners learn best from listening, they remember the conversations that took place, enjoy listening to music, and are best able to follow the instruction through listening. For them, traditional lectures are an effective learning method. Visual learners learn best by seeing and visualising the information. They remember the information easier as pictures and can easily outline where the information was located on the page. They use expressions related to visual perceptions and the visual construction of information. In trainings and lessons these learners prefer learning with pictures and visual aspects, like mind maps and tables of information for example. Tactile and kinaesthetic learning styles are often used interchangeably and although both of these learners prefer learning through sense of touch and utilising their body there is a slight difference between the concepts. Tactile learners learn best by using their hands: for example, taking notes or highlighting the text while reading are good learning methods for them. Kinaesthetic learners learn best by using their whole body: they like to move, and easily learn new trajectories and are good at tasks that require balance. Teaching sessions that utilize the body work best for them. Physicality is often associated with a tactile learning channel: the use of the sense of touch reinforces the learning experience. Although it is beneficial to differentiate these different learning styles and acknowledge them while teaching or designing a training, it should also be acknowledged that even though a person is strong in some learning style it does not mean they do not need other channels as well (Uplus, n.d.)

Learning agility refers to a person's willingness to seek new experiences and opportunities to learn new knowledge and skills. Employees high on learning agility seek for opportunities to learn new knowledge and skills and thus are

willing and able to incorporate that information into how they perform their work. While acknowledging this during the participant selection process for the training is beneficial, it should however not be the determinative factor (Gowan & Lewak, 2010: 229.)

The confidence that a person has that they perform a certain task is called self-efficacy. If a person has self-efficacy concerning a specific task, they will most likely succeed in it. While training, participants who have high self-efficacy regarding the training are more likely to perform well in the training and are more likely to incorporate that into their jobs. However, participants with high self-efficacy might also not be as invested in the training as they have the confidence that they already excel the task. Meaning participants with lower self-efficacy might work harder to learn in the training to overcome their lack of confidence.

What should also be taken into consideration while designing a training program is that the subject might not be equally as interesting to everyone. It increases the effectiveness of the training program if the participants are genuinely interested in it. Having a charismatic trainer engaging the participants and informing them how they can personally benefit from participating, are likely to stimulate their interest further (Gowan & Lepak, 2010: 229). Interest in the training relates closely to work motivation and commitment which were briefly discussed earlier in section 2.2.

Location of the training should be chosen not only on the basis of the subject of the training but also considering distractions and promoting learning. Some training requires everyone's presence in the workplace, and some might be better handled remotely.

2.3.2 Implementation

In the implementation phase the training methods should be considered. Ensuring that the method of training delivery matches the content, and the audience will increase the value that the training adds. Some of the most

common types of training methods will be discussed in the following (Gowan & Lepak 2010: 232).

On-the-job training refers to training in which a manager or a co-worker teaches an employee to perform some aspect of the job in the actual working environment rather than in a separate training location. Primary benefit of this is that the employees are learning while being productive. Different types of operations and procedures manuals can offer an outline of the different procedures and tasks related to the specific job as well as the company's common policies and practices. These work well because once the instructions are written down, the employees can refer to them as often as needed for clarification. Traditional classroom training can also be an effective way to share information. Lectures are not the most effective way to train employees, but including role plays, discussions and other activities the participants can participate in increases the effectiveness of the training. However as was discussed in the earlier section 2.3.2, different types of training work for different people (Gowan & Lepak, 2010: 233). For auditory learners for example, lectures could work effectively since they learn best from listening (Uplus, n.d.). Online learning refers to a training delivered online. The main benefits of it are that it can be executed regardless of the participants or the trainer's location and depending on the type of online learning it might also be on demand and available at any time. Coaching can also be used as a form of training as well as employee development. It refers to short-term training provided one-on-one and is usually focused on improving a certain skill or ability. Blended learning refers to using multiple modes of training to accomplish a certain goal and to fill the competence gap identified in the needs assessment. This type of training could for example include one stage executed online and another as classroom training (Gowan & Lepak, 2010: 235).

2.3.3 Evaluation

After the training has been implemented, it is time to evaluate its effectiveness. The meaning of evaluation is to determine the effectiveness of the training

program, but it is important to clarify in what terms the effectiveness is evaluated. The four levels of evaluation defined by Donald Kirkpatrick measure reaction, learning, behaviour and results in training programs.

The first level of evaluation evaluates reaction, and the purpose is to measure how the attendees feel about the training. This is usually done by using reaction sheets. These reactions should be evaluated not only to benefit the trainer but to show the attendees that you care about their feedback and to ensure that they have gone back to their work with a positive attitude after the training. Kirkpatrick argues that if reaction and satisfaction is not measured, it is subtly giving a hint that feedback is not wanted or needed. Reaction sheet should include at least: reaction to the content of the program, reaction to the skills and effectiveness of the instructor and reaction to the education aids, such as power point slides or case studies for example. Other aspects to include could be more oriented towards the attendee, like what key takeaways did the attendee find from the training and how they are planning to utilise those in their own work. Some guidelines to remember while making the reaction sheet are stated in the following; determining what is wanted from the evaluation, designing the form so that the answers can be quantified by using five-point answer scale for example, encouraging written comments in addition to multiple choice questions, having the attendees fill out the sheet as quickly as possible after the training to ensure the number of answers and to get honest answers it should be considered making the name field optional (Kirkpatrick, 2007.)

The second level of evaluation evaluates learning. This consists of a combination of what knowledge was learned, what skills were developed or improved and what attitudes were changed. Learning is measured because if the training course does not meet one or more of the above learning objectives, you cannot expect any change in behaviour. Evaluating learning is important to measure the effectiveness of the instructor in increasing knowledge and changing attitudes, meaning there can be no change in behaviour expected if learning did not happen. Measuring learning can be more time consuming and difficult than reaction but some guidelines to consider could be using a control

group to compare those who got the training and those who did not, evaluating competences before and after the program by using a performance test or observation for example and using the results of the evaluation to take proper action (Kirkpatrick, 2007.)

The third level of evaluation evaluates behaviour. It attempts to evaluate the changes in job behaviour caused by the training. Evaluating this is more complicated than the first two levels. Some issues in this might be that the attendees cannot change their behaviour and thus use the competences learned until an opportunity occurs, also it is impossible to predict when change in behaviour might occur and lastly although the goal of the training is for the attendees to continue with the new behaviour after the training they might not do so, because of time restrictions or other limiting factors. Some guidelines and measures to aid in the process are allowing time for results, measuring the changes in behaviour by evaluating it before and after the program and repeating the measurement at appropriate times (Kirkpatrick, 2007).

The fourth level is evaluating the results and although it is the last phase it should be considered first while planning the training. While planning it should be considered what results are hoped to achieve during the training, what behaviours are needed to accomplish those results, what knowledge, skills, and attitudes are necessary to initiate these behaviours and how can these be achieved while making the training program practical, interactive and enjoyable. Some aspects to measure and examine while evaluating results could be quality, customer satisfaction, productivity and increased sales (Kirkpatrick, 2007.)

2.4 Feedback

Feedback is another critical tool for progress and improvement. Self-assessment does help but without feedback it is difficult to truly assess if an individual has succeeded in a task or not (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen, 2012: 13). While discussing feedback in this thesis it will be examined mostly, inside an

organisation or a workplace. Without feedback, employees cannot know if they are meeting the requirements of the job or if the supervisor or company is satisfied with their work (Garber, 2008). Feedback has two functions: it presents the current state of their competence to a person and ensures the right path for development. Feedback gives a person information on how their behaviour affects other people, it helps to see the strengths and weaknesses in oneself and to make the right decisions to achieve the wanted goals and objectives. The power and effect of feedback strengthens the more people inside an organisation give and receive it, especially if the feedback is encouraging. Everyone can give feedback; it is not reserved only between an employee and their supervisor (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen 2017: 13).

Two types of feedback can be distinguished: corrective feedback and encouraging feedback. Corrective feedback addresses actions that have been in some way incorrect or undesirable. These actions are discussed with the person and solutions and alternative ways to act to line with the organisation's operations and objectives are sought together. encouraging feedback is usually given when a person achieves good results, good attitude or other successes (Puro, 2010: 89). Encouraging feedback increases the feeling of success and development both in the recipient and the giver which encourages to continue the good work. Encouraging feedback from successes will lead to more successes, thus people learn more effectively from successes than corrective feedback. Feedback can help increase the responsibility and commitment of employees everyone clearly knows what is expected of them. It also spreads the feeling that people are interested in the individual's work which increases the feeling of the work being meaningful (Ahonen & Lohtaja-Ahonen, 2017: 73-74).

In order for feedback to be effective in terms of results, it must be designed and delivered properly. In addition to informal immediate feedback given on the spot, companies often develop a formal feedback system. Performance feedback systems can provide employers and employees with the documented information about performance in variety of formats. The different formats and

ways to present feedback could be for example a traditional performance evaluation provided by the supervisor, peer-to-peer feedback, customer feedback, employee-to-supervisor feedback and 360-degree feedback. The 360-feedback process combines feedback from peers, supervisors, subordinates, and other outside sources to collect a more complete and balanced vision the individual's work. It is more time-consuming than the other methods but it gives a more realistic picture of one's competences and performance than feedback from only one person's perspective (Garber, 2008.)

Feedback should be both-sided meaning the person receiving the feedback should be able to respond to the feedback they receive. Without this interaction feedback is only one-sided and not as effective. The individual should have the opportunity to agree or disagree with the information about themselves and the feedback provider should listen and consider the individual's perspective (Garber, 2008).

It is also important that the feedback is connected to the individual's actual work performance, meaning the supervisor needs to somehow observe the individual working. If the individual feels that the feedback is not connected to the individual's actual work performance, the feedback will most likely be disregarded by the individual. This might lead to the loss of motivation and it discourages the person to do anything beyond what is minimally required. (Garber, 2008).

3 Recommended Action Plan

The plan consists of three different parts, together they provide the basis for ensuring that the trainers have the needed competences. The process is described in figure 4. The process starts with the trainer onboarding which happens between the recruitment and the pilot training. In the onboarding the most important factor is to make sure that the trainer knows what is expected of

them in order for them to give their best effort. The process continues with a training provided for all trainers in the company's network. The last phase is feedback which will be delivered at least once a year and it includes feedback from both the company and the customers, while also providing the trainer the opportunity to give feedback.

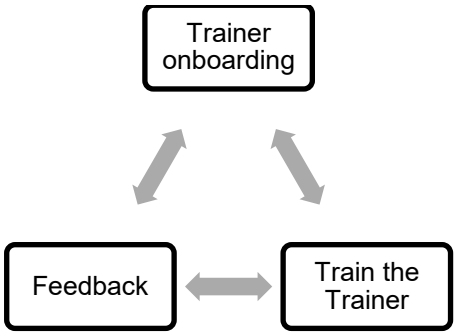

Figure 4: Process of competence development in the recommended action plan

Below, a more detailed plan of action will be described. It includes recommended lengths and timings for the different parts as well as structured plans for trainer onboarding and feedback meetings and lesson plans for the first train the trainer trainings.

The onboarding process the company already has in place is working but it should focus even more on ensuring that the trainers know what is expected of them for them to be able to perform their best. The trainer onboarding starts already in the first meeting with the new trainer, while meeting the trainer for the first time and hearing more about their background, the company is introduced as well as the policies and procedures concerning the trainer. When the co-operation has been agreed on, the official onboarding meeting is scheduled. It should be held before the trainer starts planning their training, therefore the rule could be to have it at least a month before the scheduled training. In that 30–60-minute Teams-meeting, the technical aspects are explained to the trainer such as preparing the material and the test questions. What is important to include in the meeting is ensuring that the trainers are aware of what is expected of them in terms of the material, the presentation and the overall delivery of the training. This onboarding meeting also allows the trainer to ask any questions they might

have regarding the training or it's topic or anything related to those. Since the trainers are freelancers there is no need for in-depth onboarding, but this onboarding meeting is meant to provide the trainer with the necessary information about the training and the recording situation in addition to ensuring that they feel confident to hold the training. The technical aspects should be permanent part of the onboarding, but the other aspects can be adjusted depending on the trainer. For example, for someone who has never made a recorded training it might be beneficial to explain the process more while for some that might not be necessary. The training planners who are the first contact with the trainers are responsible for this onboarding.

The Train the Trainer- training is designed for the trainers as an opportunity to develop their own competences. Making it an optional benefit to the co-operation with the company that benefits their other training assignments as well makes the participants more motivated. The training could be held twice a year, at the beginning of the year and in the fall. Having the training online is suggested to increase the number of participants. Including practical exercises in the training is important due to the nature of the subject, using breakout rooms and/or some elements of coaching in the training makes it more effective. The subjects vary in each session to include different aspects of presentation skills, they could be based on the instructional objectives introduced in section 3.4.1. and the categories introduced in section 2.1.4: interaction skills, building a presentation, content of the presentation, presenting style, performance anxiety and appearance. Beneath a suggestion for the topics of the first four training sessions can be found. The training will be held by a trainer of the specific fields and the lesson plans and the length of the sessions should be discussed further with them.

1. **Interaction skills:** Activating the participants especially in a recorded training and inducing and maintaining motivation in participants

2. **Building a coherent presentation:** structuring the presentation sensibly and using different illustrative methods

3. **Planning the content of the presentation:** building the content according to the target audience**,** choosing and highlighting the significant information and justifying opinions and arguments in a credible manner

4. **Presenting style and appearance:** using voice, language and non-verbal communication appropriately and considering the role of appearance in presenting

The reaction sheet found on appendix 1 should be provided to the participants immediately after the sessions to get their reaction and feedback on the implementation. This will benefit also in the future and the next sessions and their lesson plans can be adjusted accordingly after examining the results. To evaluate the results and if learning or changes in behaviour happened after the training, the trainings made by the participants should be examined. To do that, the training planners should choose a test group of trainers and observe their trainings before and after the training. The customer satisfaction survey results should also be examined, since the need for improvement in these skills rose in those results as well.

It is advisable that the company incorporates a systematic approach to providing feedback. This could be executed by having feedback discussions or by providing the trainers with written feedback. Since there are trainers who work for the company more regularly than others, the decision of how to deliver the feedback could be done based on that. For the trainers who train with the company often, there could be a short 30-minute discussion with some specific discussion areas. These areas are customer feedback, the company's feedback and the trainer's feedback to the company. The customer feedback could be compiled from the feedback data and summarised to the trainer. The company's feedback could include feedback about the content of their training, their presentation skills and the suitability of their training content to Company X's desires. As feedback should always be two-sided, the trainer should be able to provide their feedback or concerns to the company as well. For the trainers who

train with the company less, there could be either a phone call or an email send to with the feedback's from the customers and some comments from the company. These feedbacks could be provided once a year.

4 Conclusion

Companies struggling to match the staff competence development practices with the needed skills need to accurately define the needed and lacking competences and find the right methods of development. Utilising different methods of competence development increase the effectiveness of the development. To ensure the needed competences of trainers in Company X, trainer onboarding, a training program focusing on presentations skills and a formal feedback system were chosen as the methods of competence development. These together form a recommended action plan for Company X to develop the presentation skills of their trainers.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Reaction Sheet

1. The trainer's expertise of the subject matter

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very dissatisfied	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very satisfied

2. The trainer's presentation skills

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very dissatisfied	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very satisfied

3. The structure of the training

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very dissatisfied	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very satisfied

4. The content of the training

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very dissatisfied	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very satisfied

5. The length of the training

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very dissatisfied	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very satisfied

6. The illustrative methods and exercises used

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very dissatisfied	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very satisfied

7. The usefulness of the training

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very dissatisfied	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very satisfied

8. What was good about the training and what could be developed?

9. Wishes or ideas for new training sessions

Appendix 2. Case Study: Company X (Confidential)

Confidential