

SELECTED REFERENCES

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SECTION

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WORKPLACE LITERACY**

The bottom line: basic skills in the workplace. A joint publication of the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC 20402. Superintendent of Documents. U.S. Government Printing Office. 1988. 50 pp. (Stock No. O29-000-00424-2). \$3.25.

If the quality of the workforce is to improve, better ways of teaching reading, computation, communication, and reasoning skills to employees must be developed. This publication presents literacy program designs and strategies for implementing them. It shows how a "literacy audit" is performed, so that management can both determine job-specific skills requirements and assess worker proficiency in these skills. The processes examined include: defining company goals and performance standards; identifying problem areas; harnessing the human, financial, and capital resources required to determine effective program design; enlisting outside educational support systems and services; recruiting trainees; and establishing curriculum that is most relevant to the task at hand.

Carnevale, Anthony P. and Leila J. Gainer. *The learning enterprise.* Alexandria, VA 22313. American Society for Training and Development (1630 Duke St., Box 1443). 1989. 54 pp. One free copy on request. \$5.00, additional copies.

In 1890, 50% of U.S. GNP came from natural resources. Today, given the shift towards a service and information-based economy, human resources account for four-fifths of the total economic output, making adequately trained employees an essential key to sustaining America's competitive advantage. The authors describe cumulative changes in workplace skill levels that are requiring firms to provide direct or indirect job-related training. They review different employer-based training and development systems and the differences in workplace learning between small and large employers. They examine job-related education and training in several diverse occupations.

Carnevale, Anthony P. and Janet W. Johnston. "Assessing workplace learning." (pp. 45-70). *Training America: strategies for the nation.* Alexandria, VA 22313. American Society for Training and Development (1630 Duke St., Box 1443). 1989. 74 pp. \$20.00, members; \$25.00, non-members.

Few employers provide on-the-job training, because the return on their investment is frequently offset by the numbers of employees who either use their newly acquired learning to find new and better jobs, or are lured away by other firms offering salary increases. Employers are further deterred by high costs and the lack of absolute assurance that training programs will yield desired results. Among the authors' recommendations: Employers nationwide should commit 4% of their payrolls to increase and improve work-

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** Items from this list should be ordered directly from the publisher. Addresses are given in connection with each reference.

place learning. Federal and state governments should offer incentives, subsidies and grants that encourage employers to provide job-related training. Employees should be encouraged to undertake training, and their employers should provide financial aid, paid educational leaves, training vouchers and other incentives. The authors also discuss retraining and upgrading efforts for workers in Europe, Japan, Great Britain and Canada.

Fusco, Mary Ann Castronovo. "Employment relations programs." *Employment Relations Today* (Executive Enterprises Publications, 22 W. 21st St., New York, NY 10010-6904), Spring 1989. pp. 89-92. \$36.00.

Sophisticated new technologies have created a demand for a workforce capable of assimilating and implementing new concepts and techniques. Companies find it in their best interest to offer employees training in basic skills and technological advances. The Technology Readiness program at the Polaroid Corporation helps workers manage changes in their jobs. The curriculum is directly work-related. The main components of the program are: assessment; brokered work; and company-sponsored courses offered in-house, on company time, and on a tutorial basis. Assessments are made in math needed to support the sciences. Brokered work refers to programs that are delivered on an ad hoc, customized basis and support the needs of a particular department. Company-sponsored courses are offered three times a year and connect information to work. Confidentiality is a key to the program's success. Tuition costs are absorbed by the department that refers the employee for help.

Galagan, Patricia A. "Joining forces: business and education take on competitiveness." *Training and Development Journal* (The American Society for Training and Development, 1630 Duke St., Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313), July 1988. pp. 26-29. \$6.00.

The search for the competitive edge, coupled with poor prognosis about the skills of future workers, have enhanced the union between business and education. One out of three companies offers basic skills training. The Committee for Economic Development surveyed several thousand large and small employers concerning what they needed in skills, attitude, or behavior from their employees. Of the ten broad categories identified, learning how to learn was deemed most important. In order to perform certain kinds of entry level work, a person may need more than the traditional academic skills. Providing scholarships for the future workforce of poor and disadvantaged youth is the most popular trend in school-business collaboration.

Goddard, Robert W. "Combating illiteracy in the workplace." *Management World* (Administrative Management Society, 4622 Street Road, Trevese, PA 19047), March/April 1989. pp. 8-11. \$4.00.

With an economy that is shifting to services and information, employees who can use computers and understand technological concepts are in demand. A Department of Labor sponsored study, *Workforce 2000*, estimates that by the year 2000 the majority of all jobs will require post-secondary education for the first time in U.S. history. Minority workers, who historically have often lacked the necessary schooling and skills, are at risk. Pre-employment forms completed in the office help detect unskilled applicants who try to mask their handicaps. Job descriptions should specify the required level of skills. Post-employment tests must be validated and directly job-related to be considered legal.

Gordon, Edward E., Judith Ponticell, and Ronald R. Morgan. "Back to basics." *Training and Development Journal* (American Society for

Training and Development, 1630 Duke St., Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313), August 1989. pp. 73-76. \$6.00.

Imperial Educational Corporation is a 20-year-old program offering a work-and-home based tutoring curriculum that includes, among other areas, basic reading and math and job related skills. Individualized Industrial Programs (IIP) help trainers follow a sequentially arranged, systematic presentation with an individual or a group of no more than 5 students. Administrative quality control, student learning awareness, and constant feedback to company management during the training are emphasized. A typical training module includes 40 hours of instruction for 10 weeks. A person who has been through a training module achieves at least six months to a year of skill-level improvement. Students who need more training are regrouped.

Greenberg, Eric Rolfe. "Some pointers on basic training techniques." *Personnel* (American Management Association, Box 408, Saranac Lake, NY 12983), September 1989. pp. 22-26. \$5.00.

While the literacy level of the incoming workforce is steadily decreasing, the skills needed to perform the work of the future are increasing. An AMA survey of over 1000 human resources managers found that only 34% of the companies polled engage in basic skills proficiency testing, and less than 10% offer basic training in reading, writing and arithmetic. Analysts warn that proficiency tests are not ends to themselves but assist an organization in achieving other objectives. The relationship between the organization's needs and individual skills should be emphasized. Generic test instruments may be unfair and ineffective, as they fail to match employee competencies against specific job requirements.

Lee, Chris. "Basic training in the corporate schoolhouse." *Training* (Lakewood Publications, 50 S. Ninth, Minneapolis, MN 55402), April, 1988. pp. 27-36. \$4.00.

Researchers define adult literacy as including "functional" or "workplace" literacy. This encompasses reading, writing, speaking, listening, mathematical skills, and the ability to process information. Companies have increasingly taken on the role of basic educator, usually in conjunction with a labor union or an outside community agency. For instance, the Aetna Life and Casualty Company, in collaboration with an outside community agency, offers a curriculum in basic business skills-reading, math, writing, oral communication and computer skills. Travelers Company's MOST/BEST 18-week program consists of eight weeks of intensive classroom work followed by ten weeks of combined work-study that includes on-the-job training. The Consortium for Worker Literacy, a group of eight New York City local unions, provides free functional context programs that tie into job requirements.

McGraw, Harold W., Jr. "Adult functional literacy: what to do about it." *Personnel* (American Management Association, Box 408, Saranac Lake, NY 12983), October 1987. pp. 38-42. \$5.00.

The number of adult functional illiterates increases each year due to the combined impact of immigration and an average school dropout rate of 30%. This situation encourages lower productivity, workplace accidents, and customer dissatisfaction. In general, only large firms with 500 or more employees develop corporate training programs which include teaching basic skills. There is a growing need for practical guidelines on how to set up basic skills programs. The human, financial and physical resources of the organization are first assessed, followed by the interviewing and selecting of educational providers. This requires analysis of the basic skills requirements of an organization's jobs by a training professional; a curricu-

lum that reflects those requirements; and job-related materials for instruction.

Ross, Irwin. "Corporations take aim at illiteracy." *Fortune* (Time, Inc., P.O. Box 60001, Tampa, FL 33660-0001), September 29, 1986. pp. 48-54. \$5.00.

Many companies have turned themselves into educators of last resort. Some contribute money to community efforts, while others solicit volunteers for tutoring the disadvantaged. Thirteen percent of a sample of 3400 people, aged 20 and over, failed a very simple multiple-choice test. Another study suggests that approximately one-fifth of adults over 18 are functionally incompetent, that is they are unable to use reading skills to cope with everyday tasks. Onan Corporation has addressed this problem by instituting an elaborate in-plant educational program, starting with basic reading and math. Students advance by stages to trigonometry and computer numeric control. Some companies like General Motors and Ford collaborate with their unions in running basic skills programs at the worksite with voluntary enrollment. Job-related courses are held on company time.

Sherman, Ellen. "Back to basics to improve skills." *Personnel*. (American Management Association, Box 408, Saranac Lake, NY 12983), July 1989. pp. 22-26. \$5.00.

Although national survey results indicate the need for company-sponsored remedial training programs, only 3% of the 1005 respondents have them. Most participants in remedial training programs are not new employees or those needing instruction in English as a second language. Of the 30 company training programs studied by AMA, participants represent a cross-section of the workforce. Companies use tests to assess their employees' disabilities. All companies stated that training costs were reasonable and worthwhile. In some instances, supervisors train their employees. In others outside professionals are brought in to teach the courses. On-site training is generally less costly. When on-site training is not feasible, high schools or community colleges may provide space, materials and teachers. Training programs average one session per week for at least three months.

U.S. Congress, Senate. Joint Economic Committee. Subcommittee on Education and Health. *Competitiveness and the quality of the American work force*. Hearings. 100th Congress. 1st. Session. Washington, DC 20402. Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office. 1988. 642 pp., Pt. 1. 590 pp., Pt. 2.

Scholars and practitioners from academia, government, labor, and business offer testimony that explores whether or not today's educational system is providing industry with workers who are adequately trained and educated. Educational redesign options are offered, and public policy recommendations are forwarded.

Workplace literacy. Edited by Anne Skagen. New York, NY 10020. American Management Association (135 West 50th Street). 1986. 74 pp. \$10.00.

The authors explain that the exact ramifications of illiteracy are hard to determine, because not only does its definition change from survey to survey, but personal and organizational needs, changes in the nature of work, and the uniqueness of each workplace all define workplace literacy over time. Chapters include descriptions of a number of workplace schoolrooms at various corporations as well as several outreach initiatives on the community and national levels. Specific committees, coalitions, and not-for-profit agencies which have mobilized to reduce illiteracy in the general population are also highlighted. The final chapter looks at major components of effective workplace education programs.