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Employees Attitudes and Perceptions towards Training at Atlantic Container Line in Virginia Beach, Virginia

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EMPLOYEES ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS TRAINING AT
ATLANTIC CONTAINER LINE IN VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

A Research Paper Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of Occupational
and Technical Studies at Old Dominion University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Masters of Science Degree

By

Colette Harmon

August 2008

SIGNATURE PAGE

This research paper was prepared by Colette Harmon under the direction of Dr. John Ritz in OTED 636, Problems in Occupational and Technical Education. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Masters of Science.

Approval By: _____

Dr. John Ritz

Date

Advisor and Graduate Program Director

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Colette Harmon

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Atlantic Container Line has become one of the premier leaders in container ocean transportation. Atlantic Container Line has its roots in Europe where over 40 years ago several steamship lines merged to form the company. As a leader in the ocean shipping industry, ACL has continued to strive to provide excellent service to its customers. In a move to provide quality service ACL has opened numerous offices in Europe and North America. The corporate headquarters is in Iselin, New Jersey, while the customer service office is based in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Due to the service it provides, this office is a very important office to the ACL transshipment system. This office impacts nearly every level of service the company provides. The Virginia Beach office plays a key role in providing customer service to all import and export customers as well as maintains the base of receivables for the company. As the company has continued to grow, management has recognized the importance of growth of its employees to meet the demands of a continually growing competitive company. The Virginia Beach office has grown from a staff of less than 10 employees to over 70 employees today. As ACL continues to expand its service levels, new employees are hired to meet the demands.

In a fast paced industry such as ocean shipping, ACL has adapted an on the job training concept to train new employees. This concept is believed to be efficient, allows for optimal training, and also enables the employees to continue to be productive. There is no formal training department located on site at ACL and employees are often sent off-site to receive additional training. The training process is very important to employees

and research has shown that the quality of the training received will play a major role in the quality of the work the employee presents.

Statement of Problem

The problem of this study was to determine the training needs of employees at Atlantic Container Line in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Research Goals

To guide the study, the following questions have been developed:

1. What are the training needs as perceived by management?
2. What are the training needs as perceived by line employees?
3. Is the on-the-job training process effective at ACL?
4. How can the on-the-job-training process be improved at ACL.
5. Does management and line employees have a different view of what training is important? What are their differing views?

Background and Significance

ACL is striving to remain competitive in the industry and continue to garner a role as a leading global organization. ACL has been fortunate that they have been able to attract great employees who wish to grow with the company. However, they must also be able to train and retain their employees to remain competitive. As this ever changing industry adapts new techniques, new methodologies, and new business concepts, companies are finding it more important to rely on their training personnel to develop their valuable human resources. Without a site training staff, ACL must ask are they really training their employees effectively. An employer's role in effective training will lead to growth and development, organizational effectiveness and productivity, and

quality management (deSilva, 1997). For a company that has grown tremendously and has expectations of continued growth, their training needs should be reviewed as they grow. Employees have often cited the lack of proper training as a major frustration within their daily routine (Langford, 2008).

Atlantic Container Line currently has no on site training classes offered. As recent as January 2008, new accounting software was introduced to employees with no formal training involved. The expectations and demands of this learning process would have been much smoother and the productivity level would have been greater if there were a structured training process involved. To better address training issues, ACL must first understand what the training demands and needs are of their employees. With this information available, ACL will be better suited to adopt innovative training programs that will benefit both the company and the employee.

Limitations

This research was open to all employees at Atlantic Container Line in Virginia Beach, VA. The participants were of varying ages and educational backgrounds. There were some conceptual limitations as participants include those from middle management to the line level employee at Atlantic Container Line.

Assumptions

The assumptions of this research study were as follows:

1. Line employees desired additional training.
2. Management would embrace the training concepts.
3. There was a need for a structured training format at Atlantic Container Line.

Procedures

This research will focus on the concerns and needs for additional training to be made available to employees at ACL. The employees participating will be given a questionnaire. The data/results will be analyzed and tabulated to determine the training needs and requirements based on employee responses. The survey will be distributed to all employees of the company.

Definition of Terms

To assist the reader the following terms were defined:

- ACL-Atlantic Container Line
- DFR-Data Freight Receipt-electronic document to replace bill of lading
- Bill of Lading-Receipt as issued by carrier for transportation of goods
- WAF-West African Service represents shipments moving to countries in West Africa
- Grimaldi-name of family of owners of ACL; also is the name assigned to ACL service for direct shipments to West Africa
- Transshipment-represents shipments that off load in Antwerp, Belgium, before traveling to destinations in West Africa
- OJT-On-the-job training-training that occurs in conjunction with daily working routine
- Soft skills training-training of skills that teach employees how to interact at the workplace
- CBT-computer based training
- SAP-accounting software purchased by ACL

Overview of Chapters

This chapter has introduced the problems and identified key questions to be answered in the research. A brief introduction to the company (Atlantic Container Line) was provided. The chapter has identified the importance of training and will be the foundation of which the remainder of the research is to be based. Chapter II was the review of literature; it has reviewed and identified the concepts of training and on-the-job training. These key concepts will be linked to ACL and their training process. Chapter III addressed the methods used to gather and tabulate the data used for this research. Chapter IV discussed the relevant findings of the research process and Chapter V summarized the findings, made conclusions based on the research goals, and made recommendations to be implemented.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Chapter II was the Review of Literature section of this research study. In this chapter, the reader was introduced to concepts of training and on-the-job training. This review was conducted as there has been no known previous research conducted at ACL in regards to the training process. The chapter defined and discussed key terms and factors that are important to the training process. The chapter also gave an overview of the importance of training to the employee and the corporation.

Definition/Key Concepts and Information-Training

Training is defined as “a planned process to modify attitude, knowledge or skill behavior through learning experience to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities. Its purpose in the work situation is to develop the abilities of the individual and to satisfy the current and future needs of the organization” (Wilson, 1999, p. 201). Training is very important to every organization; well trained employees are most likely to be efficient employees as well as happy employees. Research has shown that there are several factors that have a direct impact on training within an organization. These factors are: globalization, need for leadership, increased value placed on knowledge, attracting and retaining talent, customer service and quality emphasis, changing demographics and workplace diversity, technological advances, economic change and high performance models of work systems (Noe, 2005) These factors influence each of us on an individual level as well as ACL as a corporation.

ACL is a global company; they have multiple offices located in various countries. Internet and email allow employees to communicate with each other globally. Training is

very important on the global scale as employees must know the service ports and rules and regulations that apply to various countries and ports. The need for leadership affects training as many of ACL management members began as regular line employees. ACL as a company is always looking for quality employees to promote from within.

Knowledge is important to the training process, as knowledge can be represented in many ways. Knowledge can be the learned process associated with manual labor such as the load process of a container or the specialized knowledge associated with the members of the IT department. Knowledge can also be the years of learned experiences dealing with one particular customer that a long term employee may have gained.

Attracting and retaining talent says it all; all corporations want to attract high performing competent employees and once these employees are hired, training plays a major role in keeping them on the payroll. Customer service and quality emphasis is important to training as these parameters sometimes dictate what training is needed and required to reach acceptable customer service and quality standards. Changing demographics and workplace diversity trains employees on how to work closely with others and be respectful of each diverse individual. Technological advances impacts training as corporations have to ensure that their employees are kept abreast of all new technological developments that impact their working environment. Economic changes impact training as companies struggle to remain competitive while faced with the changes in an uncertain economy. High performance models of work systems impacts training in any industry. Change is inevitable, theorist often devise new work strategies that are introduced to business and industry as a means of increasing productivity (Noe, 2005).

Definition/Key Concepts and Information-On-The-Job Training

On-the-job training or OJT, as it is commonly known, is a structured concept of the training process. OJT has been identified as an effective training method, as it allows the employee to engage in a training process while performing the daily required duties- basically you learn as you go. It is also deemed to be effective because it allows the employee to be productive while training. It is the primary method used to broaden skills and increase productivity. OJT is very successful in strengthening skills unique to the employees' job. Companies with a sound OJT program normally will see increased morale in their employees as well as a higher level of productivity and professionalism. An effective OJT program should identify the subject/concepts, have a defined set of hours needed to achieve the desired results, have an estimated completion date and have a thorough evaluation method. Supervisors/managers should play a key role in the OJT process, however there may be a mentor or coach assigned to assist with the planning and delivery of OJT (www.doi.gov).

ACL uses OJT as its primary means of training as there is no formal training department on site or within the company. This research study will help ACL identify its strengths and weaknesses with their OJT program. Current evidence at ACL indicates that there is no formal structure to their OJT process and new employees are often trained by senior employees who are not always willing to dedicate the true energy to do an efficient job. There is no formal evaluation at the completion of the OJT process and there are no estimated completion dates.

Importance of Training to Management/Company

Training is important because it sets the tone for how the employee views the company, it helps ease the transition during the new hire process, and it builds a foundation for employees. A newly hired employee who has poor training and orientation to the company is bad business for an organization. Research has shown that it takes nearly ninety days to get a clear picture of how an employee will succeed in their job. However, the first thirty days of employment are the most important in developing the employee. Research has also shown that new hires will decide within the first two weeks whether their new workplace is what they want or they decide to stay on until they find a better job (Anderson, 2007). Five tips for an effective training process which are key to training and retaining employees are:

- Highly structured first day and orientation
- Develop and deliver training objectives for the next thirty days-the employee should know what to expect
- Establish product and technical goals for the next 30 days
- Assign a mentor – to help employee with the learning objectives
- Manager should take an active role in training process-meet with the employee on a weekly basis to answer questions and assist in the training process

Implementation of a quality training program will go a long way in assisting with the development of employees (Anderson, 2007).

Many corporations are reluctant to invest in the training process as they fear it will not be cost effective. Companies are aware that finding and training employees can be a daunting task. Many companies today worry about the amount of money spent on training and the time it takes away from the workday and the cost benefit. For a training program to be truly effective, reliable and effective training strategies and goals must be in place (Borck, 2001). A company that has a pool of well trained and qualified

employees will find that hiring from within can be a successful process. Well trained employees are a valuable and desired human resource tool at any corporation.

The training process will also assist in identifying skills/areas in which employees are weak and assist management in developing a beneficial training strategy. Companies which invest in training programs have found that their employees are better workers, happier and better qualified candidates for promotions.

There are many different types of training which can be offered. Skills set training will deal with the skills needed to get the job done. These skills can be technical or expertise knowledge. Soft skills can assist in customer service development and programs that instruct people how to interact with each other in the workplace (www.intulogy.com). Training can consist of a multitude of courses from customer service, computer basics, time management skills, and increase up to more professional levels which allow for certification.

Training can occur on site if your corporation has a functional training department. However, for smaller companies and those companies which choose to out-source training, there are many other ways to deliver training. Companies often pay a training and development company to come on-site and deliver the required training or the employees can be sent to an off-site location. Technology advances today allow training to be delivered via computer, CD-Rom, or disc. Many companies opt for the computer based training as this allows the learner to learn at their own pace. There are many options available to companies who wish to incorporate training into their office practices; however, the company must find the method that is most effective for the corporation as well as the employees. There are many companies who offer training on

an out-sourced level; some national companies are Ceridian, Vanguard, and Ken Blanchard. Some local companies are: Quality Technical Service, Training & Development Concepts, Lee Milteer, and Skillsoft. Listed below you will find some examples of training classes that are offered:

- Communication the Art of Listening
- Dealing with Difficult People
- Basic Communication Skills
- Dealing with Difficult Customers
- Staying Healthy At a Desk Job
- Managing Your Work Style to Reduce Stress
- Preventing Workplace Burnout
- How to Be a Valuable Employee
- Organizing your Paperwork and Electronic Documents
- Basics of Work-Life Balancing
- Dealing with Harassment
- Workplace Fairness Policies

Summary

Chapter II has provided an overview of training and the important concepts and factors associated with training. In general, based on the research discussed, it is definitely clear that training is important to corporations. However, how a corporation chooses to view and implement training can have the most impact on their organization. Training is important as it plays a major role in the development of all employees and these employees are the human resources that assist in the growth and success of the organization. The research discussed in Chapter II will serve as the foundation on addressing the research goals of this study. Training has been defined and Chapter III will address the methods and procedures that will be used in this research study. Chapter III will include methods and procedures, population, description of instrument, methods of collecting data procedures for statistical analysis and the summary.

CHAPTER III

Methods and Procedures

Chapter III of this study examined how the researcher intends to study the attitudes of employees at ACL and their perceptions of the current training methods being used. This chapter includes a description of the research population and the instrument design. This chapter also details the procedures used to gather and analyze data.

Population

The population of this study consisted of all current employees at the Virginia Beach location of ACL. There approximately eighty employees and each employee was given the opportunity to complete the survey at the job site.

Instrument Design

The instrument used in this study was a survey given to all employees of Atlantic Container Line. The survey consisted of both open and close-ended questions. The survey questions helped identify the employee's attitudes and perceptions towards training at ACL. The instrument included questions geared to solicit information regarding training needs, training methods and employee perceptions towards training. The survey questions were based on the five goals of the research study. An example of the survey is included in Appendix A.

Method of Collection

The survey was hand delivered to each employee at the worksite. Attached to each survey was a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, Appendix B. The cover letter also gave directions for the completion and the return of the survey. The

participants were advised that all answers would be strictly confidential and the research findings would be reported as group data.

Statistical Analysis

The responses to the survey questions were analyzed and tabulated to determine the attitudes of the employees at ACL. Responses were based on the Likert Scale. The number, frequency, and the mean of the responses were determined. The open-ended questions were reviewed and like responses were recorded in number and frequency.

Summary

Chapter III detailed the methods and procedures used to determine the attitudes and perceptions of employees at ACL. Chapter III reviewed the basis of how the data would be collected and how the data would be reported utilizing the Likert scale, mean, and frequency. The population and instrument were described in Chapter III as well as data collection and analysis identified in this chapter as well. Chapter IV reports the findings from data collected in the research. Chapter IV will complete the statistical analysis of the data and discuss what the researcher found.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

This chapter is a presentation of the findings of the research study conducted. An employee satisfaction survey was given to the employees of Atlantic Container Line in Virginia Beach, VA to determine their attitude towards training at the organization. The survey data are reported in terms of mean and the 23 question survey is discussed in terms of frequency of response and the percentages achieved. The findings of the open-ended questions are listed and discussed as well.

Background Information

The study population was all employees of Atlantic Container Line in Virginia Beach, VA. Seventy-three percent of 71 surveys, which consisted of fifty-two employees, completed the survey. The population included all departments such as accounting, customer service, exports, imports and direct service. See Table 1.

Table 1. Percentage of Surveys Returned

Number of Surveys	71
Completed Surveys	52
Response Rate	73%

Survey Results

Each survey question is discussed in this section. The participants were asked to rank each statement as to how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement. Each ranking was assigned a numerical ranking with 5 being the highest, meaning the participant strongly agreed with the statement, and 1 was the lowest indicating the

participant strongly disagreed with the statement. The participants had one response for each close-ended question.

Question 1, I like the one the job training process at ACL.

Eight percent (4) of the participants strongly disagree with this statement; twenty-three percent (12) disagree; twenty-one percent (11) neither agree nor disagree; twenty-nine percent (15) agree; and nineteen percent (10) strongly agree with the statement. The mean score was 3.2 and this indicates that the average response undecided.

Question 2, I learn best when applying the skills.

Two percent (1) of the participants disagree with this statement; two percent (1) neither agree nor disagree; thirty-five percent (18) agree with the statement; and sixty-one percent (32) strongly agree with the statement. The mean score for this statement was 4.5, indicating that the response was strongly agree with this statement.

Question 3, The classroom setting is a better atmosphere for me to learn.

Thirteen percent (7) participants strongly disagree with this statement; twenty-one percent (11) disagree with this statement; thirty-five percent (18) neither agree nor disagree; twenty-three percent (12) agree with this statement; and eight percent (4) strongly agree with this statement. The mean score was 2.9, which indicated that the response was undecided.

Question 4, I prefer hands on experience during training.

Two percent (1) disagree with this statement; six percent (3) neither agree nor disagree; twenty-three percent (12) agree; and sixty-nine percent (36) strongly agree with this statement. The mean score was 4.5, which indicated that the response was strongly agreed with this statement.

Question 5, The one the job training process can be improved at ACL.

Six percent (3) disagree with this statement; thirteen percent (7) neither agree nor disagree; forty-four percent (23) agree; and thirty-seven percent (19) strongly agree with this statement. The mean score was 4.0, which indicated that the response was agreed with this statement.

Question 6, I think there is sufficient training being offered at ACL.

Twelve percent (6) strongly disagree with this statement; twenty-seven percent (14) disagree; twenty-five percent (13) neither agree nor disagree; twenty-three percent (12) agree; and thirteen percent (7) strongly agree with this statement. The mean score was 3.0, which indicated that the response was undecided.

Question 7, There are some areas in which I need re-training.

Six percent (3) participants strongly disagree with this statement; seventeen percent (9) disagree; thirty-one percent (16) neither agree nor disagree; thirty-eight percent (20) agree; and eight percent (4) strongly agree with this statement. The mean score was 2.9, which indicated that the response was undecided.

Question 8, I would like to see more training classes offered at ACL.

Two percent (1) of the participants disagree with this statement; twenty-one percent (11) neither agree nor disagree; thirty-five percent (18) agree; and forty-two percent (22) strongly agree with this statement. The mean score was 4.1, which indicated that the respondents agreed with this statement.

Question 9, I was made aware of my goals during the training process.

Ten percent (5) of the participants strongly disagree with this statement; fifteen percent (8) disagree; twenty-nine percent (15) neither agree nor disagree; forty-four

percent (23) agree with this statement; and ten percent (5) strongly agree with this statement. The mean score was 3.2, which indicated that the response to this statement was undecided.

Question 10, I have made mistakes due to poor/lack of training.

Six percent (3) participants strongly disagree with this statement; twenty-one percent (11) disagree with the statement; twenty-nine percent (15) neither agree nor disagree; thirty-two percent (17) agree with this statement; and twelve percent (6) strongly agree with this statement. The mean score was 3.2 which indicated that the response was undecided.

Question 11, My training needs are being met at ACL.

Eight percent (4) participants strongly disagree with this statement; nineteen percent (10) disagree with this statement; thirty-two percent (17) neither agree nor disagree; thirty-one percent (16) agree with this statement; and ten percent (5) strongly agree with this statement. The mean score was 3.1, which indicated that the response was undecided.

Question 12, My training was structured and I had set goals.

Thirteen percent (7) strongly disagree with this statement; twenty-seven percent (14) disagree with this statement; twenty-three percent (12) neither agrees nor disagrees, twenty-seven percent (14) agree; and ten percent (5) strongly agree with this statement. The mean score was 2.9 which indicated that the response was undecided.

Question 13, My manager has been very hands on during the training process.

Fifteen percent (8) participants strongly disagree with this statement; twenty-one percent (11) disagree with this statement; twenty-five percent (13) neither agree nor

disagree; nineteen percent (10) agree; and nineteen percent (10) strongly agree with this statement. The mean score was 3.0, which indicated that the response was undecided.

Question 14, My manager was available to assist me during my training period.

Eight percent (4) participants strongly disagree with this statement; fifteen percent (8) disagree; seventeen participants (9) neither agree nor disagree; thirty-one percent (16) agree; and twenty-nine percent (15) strongly agree with this statement. The mean score was 3.5 which indicated that the respondents agreed with this statement.

Question 15, My training experience at ACL was positive.

Eight percent (4) strongly disagree with this statement; ten percent (5) disagree with this statement; seventeen percent (9) neither agree nor disagree; forty-two percent (22) agree; and twenty-three percent (12) strongly agree with this statement. The mean score was 3.6, which indicated that the respondents agreed with this statement. See Table 2.

Table 2. Employee Survey-Mean and Percentage of Response for Each Question.

Survey Question	Likert Scale					Mean
	SD	D	U	A	SA	
1. I like the on job training process at ACL.	1	2	3	4	5	3.2
Percentage (%) of responses	8	23	21	29	19	
2. I learn best when applying the skills.	1	2	3	4	5	4.5
Percentage (%) of responses	0	2	2	35	61	
3. The classroom setting is a better atmosphere for me to learn	1	2	3	4	5	2.9
Percentage (%) of responses	13	21	35	23	8	

4. I prefer hands on experience during the training.	1	2	3	4	5	4.59
Percentage (%) of responses	0	2	6	23	69	
5. The on the job training process can be improved at ACL.	1	2	3	4	5	4.0
Percentage (%) of responses	0	6	13	44	37	
6. I think there is sufficient training being offered at ACL.	1	2	3	4	5	3.0
Percentage (%) of responses	12	27	25	23	13	
7. There are some areas in which I need re-training.	1	2	3	4	5	2.9
Percentage (%) of responses	6	17	31	38	8	
8. I would like to see more training classes offered at ACL.	1	2	3	4	5	4.17
Percentage (%) of responses	0	2	21	35	42	
9. I was made aware of my goals during the training process.	1	2	3	4	5	3.28
Percentage (%) of responses	10	15	21	44	10	
10. I have made mistakes due to poor/lack of training.	1	2	3	4	5	3.23
Percentage (%) of responses	6	21	29	32	12	
11. My training needs are being met at ACL.	1	2	3	4	5	3.15
Percentage (%) of responses	8	19	32	31	10	
12. My training was structured and I had set goals.	1	2	3	4	5	2.92
Percentage (%) of responses	13	27	23	27	10	
13. My manager has been very hands during my training process.	1	2	3	4	5	3.05

Percentage (%) of responses	15	21	25	19	19	
14. My manager was available to assist me during my training period.	1	2	3	4	5	3.57
Percentage (%) of responses	8	15	17	31	29	
15. My training experience at ACL was positive.	1	2	3	4	5	3.63
Percentage (%) of responses	8	10	17	42	23	

Open-Ended Questions

The survey consisted of five open-ended questions which allowed the employee to answer giving their own personal thoughts and opinions. The responses were then tabulated using frequency and listed in table format.

Question 16, How do you believe the on-the-job training process can be improved at ACL?

Of the fifty-two surveys returned, thirty-four participants or sixty-five percent responded to this question. This open-ended question allowed participants to freely express their opinion on how the on-the-job training process can be improved. The most occurring opinion was that there was more extensive training needed to enhance the on-the-job training process. Participants also indicated that a training department was needed, more training classes should be offered, and feedback should be provided during the training process. The responses are ranked by frequency. See Table 3.

Table 3. Opinions on Improving On the Job Training

COMMENT	FREQUENCY
Extensive training was needed	21
A functional training dept is needed	2

More training classes were sought	2
Training feedback is needed	1
Manuals and training guides were sought	1
Employees would like to be cross trained	1
Managers need to be more involved with the training process	1
Company strategy/goals need to be emphasized	1
There is more shipping and industry training needed	1
There should be more consistency with the training format and process	1
There should be a mandatory new hire training period	1
Management/supervisors require additional training	1

Question 17, As an employee of ACL, what do you believe the training needs are for your department? List your department.

Forty participants or seventy-seven percent responded to this question. This open-ended question allowed participants to express their opinions on what training needs were important for their respective departments. Training was a major concern for nearly every department, however it was also clear that each department expressed differing opinions on what type of training was important for their department. The accounting department stressed systems training, detailed job descriptions, industry knowledge, uniform procedures, and more department cross training. The exports department stressed industry knowledge, customer service skills, policy and procedures, systems training, and training that is job specific for their department. The exports department

also expressed a concern for cross training and a departmental training leader. The imports department viewed customer service, organizational training, and systems training as their main concerns. However, they also indicated that more industry training was needed as well as the ability to learn more about other departments and their duties and keep employees informed of changes and improvements. The direct service department indicated that types of training that was important to their department were customer service, systems training, industry knowledge, departmental procedures, and shared knowledge. The responses are listed below by department. See Table 4.

Table 4. Departmental Training Needs

Accounting
1. Systems training
2. Full/detailed job description
3. Shipping industry knowledge
4. Uniform procedures
5. Department cross training
Exports
1. Industry knowledge
2. Customer service skills
3. Policy/procedures
4. Systems
5. Job specific training
6. Cross training
7. Departmental training leader
Imports
1. Customer service
2. Organizational training
3. Systems
4. Communication skills
5. Maritime/industry training
6. Other departmental training

7. Brief employees on changes
Direct Service
1. Customer service
2. Systems
3. Maritime/industry knowledge
4. Department procedures
5. Shared knowledge

Question 18, What do you perceive as the five most important training areas for the company?

Forty participants for a total of 77% responded to this question. The responses are listed below in order of frequency. This open-ended question allowed participants to express what they felt to be the most important training needs for the company. There were numerous responses and the most frequently occurring responses were: computer/systems training, customer service training, maritime/industry training and knowledge, a new hire training program, and departmental cross training. See Table 5.

Table 5. Employees' Perceptions of the 5 Most Important Training Areas

COMMENT	FREQUENCY
Computer/systems	22
Customer Service	18
Maritime/shipping industry knowledge	14
New hire training program	11
Department Cross training	9
Company policy/procedures	9
Job specific duties	8

Communication	8
Inter-office relations	6
Time management	5
Rates	3
Management/supervisory leadership classes	2
Policy and procedures	2
Import/Export	2
Work flow	2
Developing employees	2
Dealing with employees	1
Anger Management	1
Dispatch	1
Release	1
Stress Management	1
Problem solving	1
Leadership	1
Diversity	1
Business Etiquette	1

Question 19, If you could improve the on the job training process what would you change?

Thirty-two participants or sixty-one percent responded to this question.

Participants who responded to this question were able to express their opinion on how

they believed the on the job training process could be improved. Nineteen of the thirty participants indicated that there should be a new hire training program established. Other responses were the development of a structured and organized training program, an evaluation and feedback process during training, and cross training. See Table 6.

Table 6. Suggestion on Improving On the Job Training.

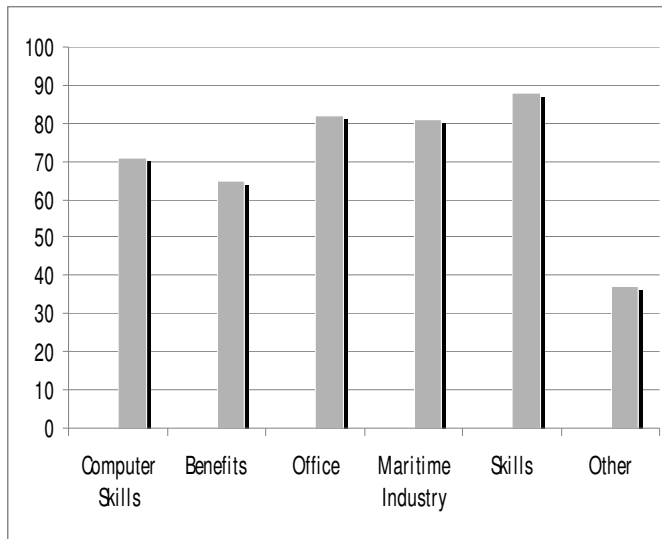
COMMENT	FREQUENCY
Establish new hire training program	19
Structured/organized training	7
Evaluation/feedback process	2
Big picture training	1
Cross training	1
Customer service skills	1
Supervisors take an active role in training	1

Question 20: On a scale of 1-6 with 6 being the highest, please rank each of the areas listed below as to which you feel is the most important type of training, i.e., 1 being the lowest and 6 being highest priority?

Twenty-two participants or forty-two percent responded to this question. The frequencies of responses are reported below. Managers were able to respond to this open ended question. Managers felt the highest emphasis should be on skills training related to the individuals job. In order of ranked responses the managers felt that office relations/politics, maritime industry knowledge, computer skills, benefits, and other miscellaneous skills were a priority for training. See Table 7.

Table 7. Most Important Types of Training.

Ranked Surveys	
Computer Skills	71
Benefits	65
Office	82
Maritime Industry	81
Skills	88
Other	37
Rankings:	
	Skills
	Office
	Maritime Industry
	Computer Skills
	Benefits
	Other



Managers Response

Five managers responded to the manager section for total of sixty-two percent participation rate. For the purpose of analyzing what was important to the management team, there were several open-ended questions directed to management only. Five of the eight managers completed this section. See Table 8

Table 8. Manager Percentage of Surveys Returned.

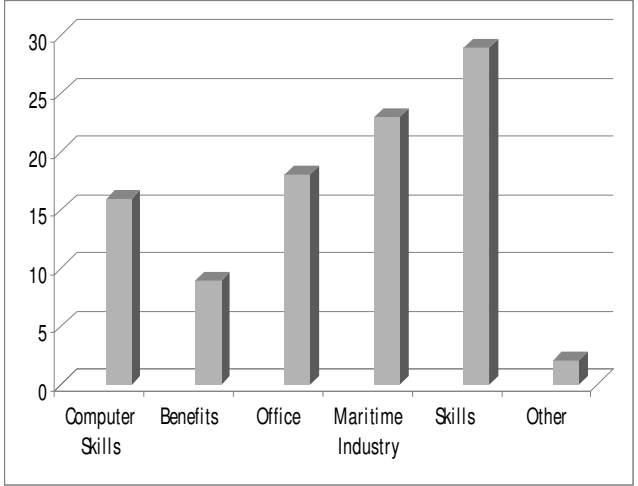
NUMBER OF SURVEYS	8
COMPLETED SURVEYS	5
RESPONSE RATE	62%

Question 20, On a scale of 1-6 with 6 being the highest, please rank each of the areas listed below as to which you feel is the most important type of training, i.e., 1 being the lowest and 6 being highest priority?

Survey data were inconsistent due to misinterpretation of question. However, there were five responses for a total of sixty-two percent of the participants. The responses indicated that managers agreed that overall skills needed for the employees to complete their jobs were the most important training. Amongst the other responses that were high on the managers list were maritime industry knowledge and office relations/politics. See Table 9.

Table 9. Management’s Opinions on Most Important Training

Ranked Surveys	
Computer Skills	16
Benefits	9
Office	18
Maritime Industry	23
Skills	29
Other	2
Rankings:	
	Skills
	Maritime Industry
	Office
	Computer Skills
	Benefits
	Others



- **Data findings are inconsistent on this question due to errors on survey.**

Survey Results

Each survey question was discussed in this section. Participants who were managers were presented with three open-ended questions. The responses were tabulated and presented in the table format. The participants had one response for each close-ended question.

Manager/Supervisor Open-Ended Question

Question 21, What do you believe the training needs are for yourself and the employees that work for you?

Managers indicated there they also had a desire for additional training for themselves as well as their employees. Some of the training issues provided in this section were vocabulary training, understanding the process, understanding the ports and terminal process, prioritizing, and finding the time to train new employees, clearly defining procedures, working knowledge of transport cycle, comprehensive internal systems training, and better understanding of COGSA Hague Container Convention.

Question 22, As a manager/supervisor. I have clear goals established for the trainee.

Twenty percent (1) disagree with this statement; twenty percent (1) agree with this statement; and sixty percent (3) strongly agree with this statement. The mean score was 4.2, which indicated that the response of the managers was to agree with the statement.

Question 23, As a manager/supervisor. I take an active role in the training process.

Forty percent (2) neither agree nor disagree with this statement; forty percent (2) agree with this statement; and twenty percent (1) strongly agree with this statement. The

mean score was 3.8, which indicated that the response was to agree with this statement.

See Table 10.

**Table 10. Employee (Manager/Supervisor) Survey
Mean and Percentage of Responses for Each Question**

Survey Question	SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean
------------------------	-----------	----------	----------	----------	-----------	-------------

	SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean
22. As manager/supervisor, I have clear goals established for the trainee.	1	2	3	4	5	4.2
Percentage (%) of responses	0	20	0	20	60	
23. As a manager/supervisor, I take an active role in the training program.	1	2	3	4	5	3.8
Percentage (%) of responses	0	0	40	40	20	

Chapter Summary

Chapter IV discussed the findings of this study. The statistical analysis of the data reported is also found in this chapter. Based on the finding the researcher was able to report the information and how it applied to the research goals. The research was also able to determine the participants' attitudes and perceptions of training at ACL. The data and information gathered in Chapter IV will be used to help determine recommendations and the course of action that will be discussed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize what has been accomplished in this research study. Conclusions will be drawn to answer each of the research goals established for this study. Recommendations will be drawn from the findings.

Summary

The problem of this study was to determine attitudes and perceptions employees have toward training at Atlantic Container Line. To determine the answer to this problem, research goals were established. The research goals were:

1. What are the training needs as perceived by management?
2. What are the training needs as perceived by line employees?
3. Is the on-the-job training process effective at ACL?
4. How can the on-the-job training process be improved at ACL?
5. Does management and line employees have a different view of what training is important?
6. What are their differing views?

Studies have shown that employees are generally enthusiastic when they were first employed. Morale and productivity begin to decline after about 6 months and continues to deteriorate (Sirota, 2006). The lack of training and poor quality of training has been a direct link to decline in employee motivation and productivity. This study was conducted to determine attitudes toward training at ACL.

This study was open to all employees at Atlantic Container Line. The population included the office administrative assistant, IT personnel, accounting department,

customer service, exports, and imports personnel. Seventy-one employees participated in this research study. The survey consisted on closed-ended statements and several open ended questions.

The instrument used to gather data was a 23 question survey. The measuring scale used to interpret this data was the Likert Scale. The surveys were delivered to employees on site. The response rate of returned surveys was seventy-three percent. Surveys were anonymously returned by participants. The results of the data were presented in the form of percentages, mean, and frequency for the population.

Conclusions

This study revealed the following:

1. What are the training needs as perceived by management?

Survey Question 20 addressed the training needs as perceived by management.

Managers' responses indicated that the most important training areas were skills related to the job, maritime industry knowledge, office relations/politics, computer skills, benefits, and other miscellaneous skills.

2. What are the training needs as perceived by line employees?

Survey Question 20 addressed the training needs as perceived by line employees.

Line employee responses indicated that the most important training areas for the company were computer/systems, customer service, maritime industry knowledge, new hire training, and departmental cross training.

3. Is the on-the-job training process effective at ACL?

Survey Questions 1-6 addressed the employees' attitudes and perceptions towards the on-the-job training process at ACL. Question 1 addressed whether the

employees liked the on-the-job training process. Data collected indicated that there was a mean of 3.2 which indicated that employees were undecided as to whether they liked the on-the job training process. Question 2 addressed the employees perceptions on applying skills learned. There was a mean of 4.5 which indicate that the employees liked to apply the skills on the job when learning. Question 3 addressed the issue of a classroom setting versus on-the-job training. There was a mean of 2.9 which indicated that employees were undecided as to whether they preferred the classroom setting. Question 4 addressed the hands on experience obtained in training and the survey response indicated a mean of 4.5, which showed that employees generally prefer the hands on experience gained when training. Question 5 addressed whether or not the employees felt the on-the-job process could be improved. The data collected indicated a mean of 4.0 which showed the employees agreed that the on-the-job training process could be improved. Question 6 addresses whether or not the employees felt that the training was sufficient at ACL. The data collected indicated a mean of 3.0 which showed that employees were undecided as to whether they believed there was sufficient training being offered at ACL. Based on the data collected the researcher concluded that although employees were unsure whether they liked the on-the-job training currently in place at ACL, they were convinced that there was room for improving the process. It was also concluded the employees preferred to learn in an atmosphere in which hands-on experience can be gained while learning.

4. How can the on-the-job training process be improved at ACL?

Survey Questions 15 and 16 addressed the employees' perceptions of how the on-the-job process could be improved at ACL. Question 15 addressed whether or not the employees training experience were positive. The data collected indicated a mean of 3.6 which showed that the employees generally felt that the training experience was positive. Question 16 asked the participants to list ways they believed the on-the-job training process could be improved at ACL. A listing of responses received by frequency indicated that employees generally felt that a more extensive and structured training program would improve the training process at ACL. Seventy-three percent (25) of the thirty-four respondents who answered this question listed this as their primary concern. Based on the data collected it can be concluded that many of the participants felt they have had a positive training experience at ACL. While the experience has been positive for the employees, they still felt that the training process can be improved.

5. Does management and line employees have a different view of what training is important? What are the differing views?

Survey Questions 20, 21, and 23 addressed the views of management and Survey Questions 18 and 19 address the view of line employees. Question 21 asked managers if they felt they had clear goals established for trainees. The data indicated there was a mean of 4.2, which showed that the managers agreed they had clear goals established. Item 23 addressed the issue of managers taking an active role in the training process. The data collected indicated a mean of 3.8 which showed that managers agreed that they took an active role in the training process. Survey Question 18 asked employees to list what they perceived as the five most important

training areas for the company. By frequency the five highest rated areas were: computer/systems training, customer service training, shipping/maritime industry, new hire training program, and department cross training. Survey Question 19 asked if they could improve the on-the-job training process, what would they change? By frequency the respondents indicated that they would like to see a new hire training program and a more structured training format. Overall both managers and line employees agreed that a structured training format was important. Based on the data collected it was concluded that both the managers and line employees felt that training was very important at ACL and that ACL would benefit from a structured training format. Managers believed the most important training area was the job specific skills, while line employees believed that computer and systems training were important. It was concluded that a new hire training program and an organized training format would be an asset to the company.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

- 1) **Formal new hire training program** - Management of ACL should consider implementing a structured training program. ACL would benefit greatly with the implementation of a formal training program that would orientate employees to the policies and procedures of the company as well as set the tone for training to be conducted at ACL. The creation of a functional training department with qualified trainers would greatly benefit the company.

- 2) **Training leaders or training team** - To ensure that the training communication is effective and consistent, ACL should implement a training team or training leads. This would ensure that the training methods are presented in the same format each time, as well as ensure the newly hired employee would know whom to go to for guidance during the training process. The trainers would conduct the training based on specific guidelines with set goals.
- 3) **Structured OJT format** - A structured OJT format to include complete job descriptions, specific duties as they relate to each job, a training manual to include work flow directions and processes. This structure should include an OJT leader/trainer so that ACL can ensure all employees were being trained utilizing the same concepts, procedures, rules, and regulations.
- 4) **Offer additional/open training classes** - The employees have expressed a need and desire to have open training classes. These classes ranged from customer service skills to maritime/shipping industry knowledge and computer knowledge as well as systems training. ACL would benefit from classes that would develop and train high performance employees who would become the future leaders of the company. ACL should consider classes that would develop supervisors and managers and also offer a wide range of soft skills classes which were needed. The investment that ACL would make in training its employees would only add to the return on investment in the future.

- 5) **Structured new hire training evaluation** - ACL must ensure that a formal and structured employee feedback process was completed with the training process. This structured feedback would allow the new employee as well as the management team to review the learning goals to ensure that the training process was effective.
- 6) **Managers** - Managers and supervisors should take an active role in the training of their employees. Managers and supervisors should be available to assist in the training process. Managers and supervisors should ensure that there were attainable training goals in place and provide feedback as necessary to the employee in training.
- 7) **This study should serve as an example evaluation** - It is suggested that ACL engage in a formal evaluation process to ensure that their current method of training was meeting the needs of the company as well as employees.
- 8) **As a final recommendation, it is suggested that the Virginia Beach office partner with the corporate office in New Jersey** - by partnering with the corporate office, ACL could include all levels of leadership who will be crucial in developing and implementing a change within the company. The corporate office/human resources could play a vital role in assisting with the development of sound training programs.

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Appendix A

Survey

Training Perception Survey-Atlantic Container Line – Virginia Beach, VA

Purpose: This survey is designed to explore the attitudes; opinions and perceptions employees at Atlantic Container Line have toward training at the Virginia Beach location.

Survey Instruction: Circle the most appropriate response which indicates how much you either agree or disagree with the statement.

1- STRONGLY DISAGREE	2- DISAGREE	3- NEITHER DISAGREE OR AGREE	4- AGREE	5- STRONGLY AGREE
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Questions:

1. I like the on the job training process at ACL.

1	2	3	4	5
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

2. I learn best when applying the skills.

1	2	3	4	5
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

3. The classroom setting is a better atmosphere for me to learn.

1	2	3	4	5
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

4. I prefer hands on experience during training.

1	2	3	4	5
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

5. The on the job training process can be improved at ACL.

1	2	3	4	5
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

6. I think there is sufficient training being offered at ACL.

1	2	3	4	5
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

7. There are some areas in which I need re-training.

1	2	3	4	5
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

8. I would like to see more training classes offered at ACL.

1	2	3	4	5
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

9. I was made aware of my goals during the training process.

1	2	3	4	5
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

1- STRONGLY DISAGREE	2- DISAGREE	3- NEITHER DISAGREE OR AGREE	4- AGREE	5- STRONGLY AGREE
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10. I have made mistakes due to poor/lack of training.

1	2	3	4	5
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

11. My training needs are being met at ACL.

1	2	3	4	5
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

12. My training was structured and I had set goals.

1	2	3	4	5
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

13. My manager has been very hands during my training process.

1	2	3	4	5
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

14. My manager was available to assist me during my training period.

1	2	3	4	5
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

15. My training experience at ACL was positive.

1	2	3	4	5
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

In the space provided below, please respond to the following questions.

16. How do you believe the on the job training process can be improved at ACL.

17. As an employee of ACL what do you believe the training needs are for your department? List your department.

18. What do you perceive as the five most important training areas for the company?

19. If you could improve the on the job training process, what would you change?

20. On a scale of 1-6 with 6 being the highest please rank the each of the areas listed below as to which you feel is the most important type of training. 1 being lowest priority and 6 being highest priority.

_____ Computer skills-i.e. word, excel

_____ Benefits/Human Resource Training – i.e. 401k, vacation, ACL policies & rules

_____ Office relations/politics-i.e. effective communication, organizational skills.

Interacting with others

_____ Maritime Industry- i.e. rules, regulations and vocabulary

_____ Skills related to your specific department – what is your department? _____

_____ Other- please explain below

****Managers/Supervisors Only****

21. What do you believe the training needs are for your self and the employees that work for you?

22. As a manager/supervisor, I have clear goals established for the trainee.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

23. As a manager/supervisor, I take an active role in the training process.

1	2	3	4	5
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To: All Personnel of Atlantic Container Line-Virginia Beach, VA

Appendix B

Survey Letter to Participants

To: All Personnel of Atlantic Container Line-Virginia Beach, VA

Hello: Fellow Employees

I am currently working on a research project as part of my Masters Degree in Occupational Education for Business and Industry Training at Old Dominion University. The goal of my research project is to identify perceptions and attitudes employees have towards training at Atlantic Container Line.

As an employee of Atlantic Container Line, I am inviting you to participate in this survey so that your opinion can be voiced. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and all responses will be held confidential. Data will be reported as aggregate information and no individual names or responses will be disclosed.

Each of you will be provided a survey and envelope to return the survey to my attention. I have coded the survey to keep track of the number of participants; please do not put your name on the survey. Place your completed survey in the mailbox in my office marked "SURVEY"

Please return all completed surveys by 06/25/08. Thank you for you participation and contributing to the success of my research.

Respectfully,

Colette Harmon

Cc: Rob O'Leary-Vice President of Human Resources and Office Services-NJ