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Factors that Influence Adults to Enroll in Professional Development Programs

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FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE ADULTS TO ENROLL

IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

To remain relevant in today's constantly evolving workplace, it is critical that individuals constantly seek learning and development opportunities. The University of Virginia's College at Wise Office of Economic Development (UVa-Wise OED), as part of its mission, provides customized training solutions for organizations and open enrollment professional development programs for individuals.

The OED supports two off-campus sites: The Southwest Virginia Technology Development Center (SVTDC) in Lebanon, Virginia, and the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon, Virginia. The SVTDC offers meeting space, hosts open enrollment professional development and enrichment programs for the community, and serves as the primary office space of the OED. The UVa-Wise Abingdon site offers primarily degree programs.

During its short history, the OED has successfully developed and launched a core of signature program offerings including soft skill, technical skill, leadership development, and certification preparation courses.   For the OED to continue to grow it must find ways to recruit the region's professionals to enroll in these professional development programs.

Statement of Problem

The problem of this study is to determine the factors that influence adults to enroll in professional development programs offered by the University of Virginia's College at Wise Office of Economic Development in order to increase enrollment in these programs.

Research Objectives

The following objective where identified for this study:

RO$_1$: Identify the educational attainment of those adults that have enrolled in professional development programs offered by the UVa-Wise Office of Economic Development.

RO$_2$: Identify further training needs of those that have enrolled in professional development programs offered by the UVa-Wise OED.

RO$_3$: Determine the factors that influence adults to enroll in professional development programs offered by the UVa-Wise OED.

RO$_4$: Recommend a recruitment strategy for recruiting adults into professional development programs offered by the UVa-Wise OED.

Background and Significance

UVa-Wise is a public, four year residential college located in Wise, Virginia. Founded in 1954, it is the only branch campus of the University of Virginia and it currently has an enrollment of 2,000 students. In 2007, UVa-Wise signed an agreement with the Russell County Industrial Development Board to manage the Southwest Virginia Technology Development Center and support the training needs of two information technology firms that have operations in Lebanon, Virginia. In that same year, UVa-Wise established the Office of Economic Development to assist regional employers with their training needs. After conducting an extensive listening tour with companies in the region, OED staff determined that leadership development and cultivating a sense of professionalism within the region needed to be the primary focus of the OED.

In designing open enrollment professional development programs, the OED staff sought to identify the training needs of both organizations and individuals of the region. The OED staff then determined what professional development programs were already being offered in the region and designed programs to fill in the training gaps.

However, the OED has also faced challenges as it relates to the marketing and recruiting efforts of the professional development programs. UVa-Wise is well known as an academic institution. However, creating awareness of the professional development programs has taken time. Compounding the problem is the identity problem that the OED encountered in the first few years of its existence. OED programs were initially promoted as Southwest Virginia Technology Development Center programs, rather than UVa-Wise programs. It was quickly realized that the UVa-Wise brand already had over 50 years of name recognition and credibility. All professional development programs are now promoted as UVa-Wise OED programs. The OED also faces competition from other training entities within the region, as well as online training.

There has been research that explored the factors that influence an individual's decision to enroll in training and development. Previous research suggests that a multitude of factors, both internal and external, will influence an individual's decision to seek training and development opportunities. Research indicates that an individual's personality will influence the probability that they will seek professional development opportunities (Major, Turner, & Fletcher, 2006). External factors such as social influences at work, among social networks, and within the family can also play a role in determining what path that individuals take in their career development (King, 2004).

However, while Maurer, Weiss, and Barbeite (2003) note the importance of understanding the factors that influence individuals to participate in professional development programs to help program developers design and implement programs, no research actually exists that details how to do it. This study will determine which factors influence individuals the most and use that research to recommend an effective marketing and recruiting strategy for the OED. Understanding why individuals choose to enroll in professional development programs will help the UVa-Wise OED better target its marketing efforts to appeal to the demographics that are more likely to enroll in professional development programs.

Limitations

This study is to determine what factors influenced adults enrolling in UVa-Wise OED professional development programs. The following limitations were applied to this study:

1. The population of this study was confined to individuals enrolled in professional development programs through the OED.

2. The study was limited only to those individuals that participated in open enrollment programs.

3. The research was conducted during the Spring 2012 program season from March through May 2012.

Assumptions

The researcher made the following assumptions while undertaking this study:

1. Participants had the ability to determine what factors influenced them to enroll in professional development programs through the UVa-Wise OED.

2. The findings of this study will provide sufficient information to allow the UVa-Wise OED program and marketing coordinator to develop a marketing campaign to successfully recruit new adults into professional development programs.

Procedures

The procedural method for data collection in this study began with the development of a questionnaire including a series of questions designed to determine the factors that influenced participants to enroll in professional development programs through the OED. The questionnaire was distributed to participants upon completion of the program in which they had enrolled. The results of the survey were tabulated and analyzed to determine why participants decided to enroll in professional development programs to assist the OED in the development of an effective recruitment strategy and in determining what other programs the region may need.

Definition of Terms

The researcher has defined terms that may have a special or significant meaning to the study.

1. <u>Professional Development</u> – Open enrollment soft skill, technical skill, leadership development, and certification preparation courses offered through the UVa-Wise OED.

2. <u>Southwest Virginia Technology Development Center (SVTDC)</u> – Higher Education Center located in Lebanon, Virginia, and managed by the UVa-Wise OED.

3. <u>Adult</u> – Individual over the age of 18 that enrolls in professional development courses through the UVa-Wise OED.

4. <u>The University of Virginia's College at Wise (UVa-Wise)</u> – State-funded college founded in 1952 and located in Wise, VA. It is the only branch college of the University of Virginia.

5. <u>Education Attainment</u> – Measures the level of education that a given population possesses.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter I provided an introduction and laid the foundation for the study of what factors influence adults enrolling in UVa-Wise OED professional development program by giving background information about UVa-Wise and its OED. Chapter I gave details about the formation of the OED and its mission to serve the organizations and individuals of southwest Virginia. Chapter I also outlined the four research objectives to be addressed in the study. The limitations and assumptions of the study are provided to set the parameters of the study. Chapter I also discussed the procedures that the study will use to gain information from participants. Definitions of terms that were particular to this study were also defined.

Chapter II reviewed the available research on factors that influence individuals to seek professional development opportunities and personal career development. Chapter III offered an overview of the methods and procedures used to collect data for the study. Chapter IV provided the finding of the research that was conducted. Chapter V presented the summary, conclusion, and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of literature was conducted to learn more about the factors that influence adults to enroll in professional development programs. The review of literature will also examine the educational attainment level of the southwest Virginia region that UVa-Wise primarily serves and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The goals of this research project are to:

- Identify the educational attainment of those adults that have enrolled in professional development programs offered by the UVa-Wise Office of Economic Development.

- Identify further training needs of those that have enrolled in professional development programs offered by the UVa-Wise OED.

- Determine the factors that influence adults to enroll in professional development programs offered by the UVa-Wise OED.

- Recommend a recruitment strategy for recruiting adults into professional development programs offered by the UVa-Wise OED.

Previous research suggests that there are a multitude of internal and external factors that might influence an individual's decision to enroll in professional development programs assuming that they have self-identified the need to enroll in such programs. Some of the factors that are reviewed in this chapter include individual motivation, social influences, economic factors, and educational attainment.

Individual Motivation

For many individuals, a career is more than just a vocation, but very much a definition of themselves and their personal aspirations (King, 2004). Some individuals may be seeking objective career success determined by work achievements, pay increases, position within a company, and promotions (Abele & Wiesse, 2007). Others tend to be motivated by subjective career success or how they feel about their career performance (Abele & Wiese, 2007). While some individuals may choose to enroll in professional development programs to obtain a pay raise or position themselves for an upcoming promotion, others may choose to enroll in a program simply to learn new skills that will make them feel better prepared for their current role. A study by Tharenou (2001) found that individuals were more likely to participate in training when they believed that the skills that they learned would lead to extrinsic outcomes. Individual's personal beliefs about their own intelligence level and their ability to develop career-related skills will determine whether they participate in training programs (Maurer et al., 2003).

According to King (2001), there are two broad types of career management strategies: positioning and influence. Individuals that pursue the positioning strategy will rely on contacts, skills, and experience to advance their careers, while those that choose the influence strategy attempt to influence the opinion of supervisors and managers to achieve desired career goals (King, 2001).

Research indicates that an individual's personality will influence the probability they will seek professional development opportunities (Major, Turner, & Fletcher, 2006). A study linking proactive personalities and the Big Five to motivation to learn and

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development activity, showed that those with proactive personalities and three of the Big Five factors, Extraversion, Openness, and Conscientiousness, were significantly more motivated to learn (Major et al., 2006).

Age also plays a role in the decision to enroll in professional development programs. A study on age as it relates to participation in training and development revealed that an individual's chronological age was not as important as an individual's relative age, or an individual's age in relation to others within a work group (Maurer et al., 2003). Overall, age plays a relatively small role in an individual's participation in training and development (Maurer et al., 2003). It was found that individuals with a higher relative age reported less support and encouragement from employers in seeking training and development (Maurer et al., 2003).   However, it appeared that chronological age was more of a factor in an individual's belief that they were able to learn and benefit from training and development (Maurer et al., 2003).

Economic Factors

Much of the literature that was reviewed on the subject of career management indicated changes in the economy and the job market will make it necessary for individuals to take more responsibility for their own career management (Abele & Wiese, 2008; Rasdi, Garavan & Ismail, 2011; Jackson, Arnold, Nicholson, & Watts, 1996).   The job market is becoming more competitive due in part to globalization (Abele & Wiese, 2008; Rasdi et al., 2011).

The current economic situation in the U.S. factors into an individual's decision to seek professional development opportunities. Job security is declining (Abele & Wiese, 2008). According to a Bureau of Labor Statistics news release, unemployment in the U.S.

was at 8.3 percent for January 2012 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). While the unemployment rate is down slightly, there are still 12.8 million people unemployed in the United States (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Those seeking employment may be looking to "retool" for a new career or update their current skills to become more marketable in a tough job market.

At the same time that individuals may be seeking professional development opportunities, organizations may be cutting back on training. In difficult economic times, the first two budgets that are cut are generally training and travel. Corporate training in the U.S. is down from $58.5 billion in 2007 to 56.2 billion in 2008 (Porco, 2011). In 2010, the average training expenditure per employee dropped 11 percent (Porco, 2011). Many companies that are training are focusing their training efforts on health and safety and induction training, as well as training for the senior management team (Tucket & Aldridge, 2011).

Training opportunities may not be as readily available from organizations as they have been in the past. As a result, individuals will have to take more responsibility for seeking outside training opportunities. At the same time, organizations may not offer reimbursement opportunities for individuals that seek training opportunities outside of the organization. Individuals that take advantage of outside training opportunities may have to pay the tuition for their training.

With technology constantly evolving, new jobs, processes, and organizations are emerging every day (Jackson, Arnold, Nicholson, & Watts, 1996). Technology creates a demand for training in that when new technology emerges, employees must be trained on how to use it. Technology also influences the way that training is delivered. The number

of training programs that are delivered online is increasing and more and more organizations are taking advantage of the availability of online training (Major et al., 2006). Web-based training is typically more cost efficient and can be delivered on demand. The UVa-Wise OED professional development programs compete against online training programs utilized by organizations and view online training as an area for future expansion.

Despite the current economic situation, it is critical that organizations continue to find ways to investing in training and developing employees. A survey of over 2,000 individuals from diverse industries across the U.S. indicated that career growth, learning, and development where among the top reasons that an individual would chose to stay with a company (Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 2000). Research indicates that individuals that hold positions with a high level of learning opportunities combined with high decision authority report more job satisfaction and commitment (Mikkelsen, Saksvik, Eriksen, & Ursin, 1999). Providing training and development opportunities for employees reduces turnover and helps retain talent (Kay & Jordan-Evans, 2000).

Social Influences

Other external factors such as social influences can also play a role in determining what path that individuals take in their career development (King, 2004). According to King (2001), peer groups and supervisors at work, along with other networks including family can influence the emphasis that an individual places on career development.

Tharenou (2001) surveyed over 2900 private and public sector employees in Australia from entry-level to mid-level managers to determine how training motivation through expectation and motivation to learn explained participation in training and

development programs. The results indicated that motivation through expectation and motivation to learn would predict employee participation in training if supervisor support was also present (Tharenou, 2001).

Supervisors responsible for performance evaluations might suggest areas of improvement during annual evaluation processes or simply encourage individuals to develop goals and pursue development opportunities. Beyond that, a supervisor's perspective plays a part in the overall company culture of professional development. A positive learning environment will predict employee's participating in training if the personal motivation is present (Tharenou, 2001).

Co-workers also contribute to a company's culture of professional development. Competition for promotions and advancement opportunities can encourage individuals to seek opportunities for professional development.

Lips-Wiersma and Hall (2007) conducted a case study of a medium-size public organization in New Zealand that was undergoing major organizational changes to determine if individuals take more responsibility for their career development and management during transitional periods. At the same time, Lips-Wiersma and Hall (2007) wanted to determine if an increase in an individual's role in career development meant a decrease in the organization's role in career development. They interviewed employees, front-line supervisors, and HR personnel at various stages in their careers. What they found is that while individuals were, in fact, taking more responsibility for their own career management during the transitional time, the organization also integrated career management into its management practices (Lips-Wiersma & Hall, 2007).

An individual's non-work support system also influences training and development activities (Maurer et al., 2003). The amount of support and encouragement provided by friends and family can make individuals feel more confident about seeking professional development opportunities (Maurer et al., 2003). However, extensive family obligations and poor support systems at home can hinder an individual's desire to seek professional development opportunities. While nothing was found in the literature, personal financial situations can also be a factor when concerning training for which individuals are not to be reimbursed from their employer.

Professional associations also drive enrollment in professional development programs. Many professional associations offer certifications that require continuing education credits to maintain certification. Normally the continuing education credits are related to new subject matter within the professional association's area of expertise (Murphy & Calway, 2008).

Educational Attainment

One of the research goals of this study is to determine the educational attainment of those adults enrolling in professional development programs with the UVa-Wise OED. The researcher anticipates that those enrolling in professional development programs through the UVa-Wise OED will have some level of college education.

In southwest Virginia, 30% of adults ages 25-64 have at least some college with 19% of the overall population having higher than a Bachelor's degree compared to 28% of those across the state with some college and 36% with higher than a Bachelor's degree (Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, 2011). According to a regional profile published by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service (2011), Southwest Virginia

had a population of 579,982 in the 2010 census. The region experienced only 2% of

Virginia's total population growth from 2000-2010 gaining only 16,000 individuals

(Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, 2011).

Summary

Chapter II reviewed the existing research on determining factors that influence

enrollment in professional development programs and training motivation. There are

several factors that affect the decision to seek profession development opportunities

including personal motivation, social influences, economic factors, and educational

attainment level. Chapter III will outline the methods and procedures that will be used in

this study including the population of the study, instrument design, data collection

methods, and statistical analysis of the collected data.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Chapter III will provide an overview of the population, instrument design, data collection methods, and statistical data used to measure the factors that influenced adults to enroll in professional development programs through the UVa-Wise OED. The study will be descriptive survey research.

Population

The sample population for this study consisted of individuals that enrolled in professional development programs through the UVa-Wise OED during the Spring 2012 program season from March through May. Participants in this study were enrolled in at least one professional development program including soft skill, technical skill, and leadership development. Participants from certification preparation courses were also surveyed. These programs ranged from four hour programs to five day programs.   The participants were chosen to ensure that the data collected provided an accurate representation of the population of adults enrolling in professional development programs through the UVa-Wise OED.

Instrument Design

A survey was developed as an instrument to collect data for this study. The survey was created by the researcher to determine the factors that influence adults to enroll in professional development programs through the UVa-Wise OED. The survey was designed to address the study's research questions. It consisted of 10 questions that were both open- and close-form questions designed to collect demographic information, employment status, level of experience, and management responsibilities. The survey

also polled participants on how they learned about UVa-Wise OED programs and inquired about future interests. The survey also featured a Likert-scale portion where participants were asked to rate how each listed factor influenced their decision to enroll in professional development programs through the UVa-Wise OED. See Appendix A for a copy of the survey.

Methods of Data Collection

The survey was distributed to participants' email addresses via the online survey tool, Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com). The link to the survey was sent to each of the participants along with a cover letter detailing the reason for the survey and the importance of their participation to the research study. The surveys were submitted anonymously. It was estimated that the survey would take less than 10 minutes to complete. Each participant was asked to respond in 10 days. Reminder emails including the link were sent after five days to encourage participants to respond. See Appendix B for a copy of the cover letter.

Statistical Data

The responses to the survey questions were tabulated and analyzed to determine what factors influenced participants' decision to enroll in professional development programs through the UVa-Wise OED. The number, percent, and mean were calculated and reported in the finding of this study.

Summary

Chapter III covered the methods and procedures that were used to determine the factors that influenced adults to enroll in professional development programs through the UVa-Wise OED. Chapter III provided details about the population which included all of

the individuals enrolled in professional development programs during the spring of 2012. In this chapter, the survey instrument design was presented as well as the methods that the researcher planned to use to collect data for the study. Chapter III also reported the statistical analysis that was to be used to interpret the data collected through the survey. In Chapter IV, the findings of the research study will be presented.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In this chapter, the findings of the research will be presented to determine what factors influenced adults to enroll in professional development programs through the UVa-Wise OED. In addition, the findings will also provide insight on the educational attainment of those that enrolled, as well as how they heard about the program, and what additional programs would be of interest to them.

Participation Information

The population of adults that enrolled in professional development programs through the UVa-Wise OED in the spring of 2012 was 37. The entire population was surveyed. See Table 1 for response rate:

Table 1

Response Rate

Number of Surveys	37
Completed Surveys	25
Response Rate	67%

Survey Results

Demographic Questions

The first portion of the survey asked questions regarding gender, age, educational attainment, occupation, level of experience, and level of managerial responsibility. These responses would assist the researcher in identifying the market segments that were enrolling in professional development programs.

Nineteen of the participants in the survey were female (76%) and six of the participants were male (24%). The average (mean) age of participants was 42.6 years. The youngest participant was 23, while the oldest participant was 64 (See Table 2).

Table 2

Mean Age of Respondents

Response	N	Mean
All respondents	25	46.2

The data indicated that seven participants (28%) had completed a graduate degree or higher, ten (40%) had received a Bachelor's degree, two participants (8%) had completed an Associate degree, five (20%) participants had completed some college but had not graduated, and one participant (4%) had completed a high school degree or equivalent.

Table 3

Education Status

Response Category	%
Graduate Degree	28
Bachelor Degree	40
Associate Degree	8
Some College but No Degree	20
High School or Equivalent	4

Question 3 was an open-ended question that asked each participant about their

current occupation (See Table 4). This will help the researcher to determine if

professional development programs are attracting a particular industry segment.

Table 4

Respondent Occupation

Response	Frequency
I work in the Office of Student Life- primary responsibilities are housing placement & judicial affairs	1
Manager	1
Sr. Consultant, CGI	1
Consultant	2
Administrative Assistant	4
Information Outreach	1
Sales and Research Manager	1
Sales Administrator	1
IT Consultant	1
Healthcare – Manager Physician Recruitment for 22 hospitals	1
Administrative Assistant/Receptionist	1
Social Worker	1
Software Developer	1
Case Manager	1
Executive Secretary	1
Operations Officer	1

Table 4 continues

Business Owner	1
Director of Business Development and Public Relations	1
Human Resources/Payroll	1
Higher Education student services	1
Director of Marketing/Admissions in Healthcare	1

The data presented in Tables 5 and 6 indicated the level of experience and managerial responsibilities of each participant. Five (20%) of the participants indicated that they were entry level employees with one to five years of experience and three participants (12%) specified they were at the mid-level of their career with five to ten years of experience. Seventeen participants (68%) indicated that they were experienced employees with ten or more years of experience. While the number of those with experience was high, 10 participants (40%) indicated that they did not have management responsibilities. Two participants (8%) were at the vice-president level or above, two participants (8%) were at the director level, seven participants (28%) were considered managers, two participants (8%) were supervisors, and two participants (8%) indicated that they were team leads.

Table 5

Level of Experience

Response	N	Percentage
Entry Level (1-5 years)	5	20%
Mid-Level (5-10 years)	3	12%
Experienced (10+ years)	17	68%

Table 6

Managerial Responsibility

Response	N	Percentage
Team Leader	2	8%
Supervisor	2	8%
Manager	7	28%
Director	2	8%
Vice-President or Above	2	8%
I don't have management responsibilities	10	40%

Professional Development Enrollment

The second portion of the survey asked questions of the participants based on a Likert-scale regarding the factors that influenced their decision to enroll in professional development programs through the UVa-Wise OED. The data showed that most of participants enrolled in professional development programs because they wanted to "improve job performance" which had a mean of 4.40. Other factors that had a significant influence on the participants' decision to enroll in professional development programs included "personal satisfaction" with a mean of 4.32 and to "learn a new skill/technology" with a mean of 4.20. "Get away from the office" and "earn CEU's for Certification" had the least influence with means of 2.30 and 2.52 respectively.

Table 7

Factors That Influenced Enrollment in Professional Development Programs

Response Category	n	Mean
Preparation for promotion	25	3.24
Company requirement	25	2.96
Supervisor encouraged me to enroll	25	3.32

Table 7 continued

Recommendation from HR	25	2.80
Training funds where available	25	3.24
Cost was affordable	25	3.56
To switch jobs/careers	25	2.68
Learn new skill/technology	25	4.20
Get away from office	25	2.38
Earn CEU's for certifications	25	2.52
For greater job security	25	3.06
To help me secure a job	25	2.68
Improve job performance	25	4.40
Personal satisfaction/Interest	25	4.32
To receive recognition	25	2.60

The final portion of the survey asked participants how they heard about the UVa-Wise OED and what other programs that they would be interested in taking through the UVa-Wise OED. The data presented in Tables 8 and 9 would help the OED determine what marketing strategies were most effective in promoting professional development programs. The data presented in Table 10 would help the UVa-Wise OED decide what programs to offer in the future to better serve professionals in the region.

Table 8

How You Heard about UVa-Wise OED Professional Development Programs

Response Category	n	%
Newspaper	0	0
Website	1	4%
Email	8	32%
Social Media	1	4%
Employer	11	44%
Word of Mouth	0	0
Other	4	16%

Table 9

How You Heard about UVa-Wise OED Professional Development Programs

Response	Frequency
Employed in the same building	1
Chamber event	1
Sharon VanDyke	1
Very familiar with everyone there	1

Table 10

Other Programs to Be Offered through the UVa-Wise OED

Response Category	n	%
Certification Prep	9	36%
HR	7	28%
Technology	16	64%
Leadership	17	68%
Soft Skills	8	32%
Business Basics	7	28%

Other programs that participants were interested in taking included the following:

1. Any courses that would assist me in being more efficient in my current position and in general.

2. Business Marketing.

Summary

Chapter IV provided results for the data gathered from the survey. The researcher distributed surveys via email to thirty-seven participants enrolled in professional

development programs through the UVa-Wise OED during the spring of 2012. Twenty-five participants completed and submitted the survey via Survey Monkey for a completion rate of 67 percent. Data were then analyzed to determine the mean and percentage of the responses gathered during the data collection process. Chapter V will provide the Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes the summary, conclusions, and, and recommendations of the factors that influenced adults to enroll in professional development programs through the UVa-Wise OED. The summary will provide an overview of the study and the conclusions will answer the research questions based on data collected in the study. The recommendations will offer suggestions for future areas of study based on the results found in this study.

Summary

The problem of this study was to determine the factors that influenced adults to enroll in professional development programs offered by the University of Virginia's College at Wise Office of Economic Development in order to increase enrollment in these programs. The UVa-Wise Office of Economic Development was formed in 2007 to serve the Southwest Virginia region by offering professional development to individuals and customized training solutions to companies. The following objectives were identified for this study:

RO_1: Identify the educational attainment of those adults that have enrolled in professional development programs offered by the UVa-Wise Office of Economic Development.

RO_2: Identify further training needs of those that have enrolled in professional development programs offered by the UVa-Wise OED.

RO_3: Determine the factors that influenced adults to enroll in professional development programs offered by the UVa-Wise OED.

RO$_4$: Recommend a recruitment strategy for recruiting adults into professional development programs offered by the UVa-Wise OED.

A survey was designed and distributed via email to 37 individuals that enrolled in professional development programs through the UVa-Wise OED during the spring of 2012. Twenty-five individuals responded to the survey for a response rate of sixty-seven percent. Each participant was asked questions regarding age, gender, educational attainment, occupation, level of experience, and level of managerial responsibilities. Participants were also asked to identify factors that influenced their decision to enroll in professional development programs through the UVa-Wise OED based on a Likert-scale. In the final portion of the survey, participants were asked to identify how they had heard about the OED programs and what other programs they would be interested in taking through the OED.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were drawn from the data collected from the survey instrument and based and the research study and its objectives. Each objective is addressed individually below.

Research Objective 1 was to identify the educational attainment of those adults that have enrolled in professional development programs offered by the UVa-Wise Office of Economic Development. Data indicated most participants had completed at least some college. Seven participants (28%) had completed a graduate degree or higher, ten (40%) had received a Bachelor's degree, two participants (8%) had completed an Associate degree, five (20%) participants had completed some college but had not graduated, and one participant (4%) had completed a high school degree or equivalent.

When compared to the educational attainment in southwest Virginia as a whole a greater percent of the adults that had enrolled in professional development programs had a Bachelor's degree or higher. In southwest Virginia, 30% of adults ages 25-64 have at least some college with 19% of the overall population having higher than a Bachelor's degree (Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, 2011).

Research Objective 2 was to identify further training needs of those that have enrolled in professional development programs offered by the UVa-Wise OED. Data indicated that the most acute training need was that of leadership development with 17 participants (68%) indicating that they would like to seek more training opportunities in that area. Sixty-four percent of participants (16) responded that they would be interested in technology programs offered through the OED.

Research Objective 3 was to determine the factors that influenced adults to enroll in professional development programs offered by the UVa-Wise OED. According to the survey results, most of participants enrolled in professional development programs because they wanted to "improve job performance" which had a mean of 4.40. Other factors that had a significant influence on the participants' decision to enroll in professional development programs included "personal satisfaction" with a mean of 4.32 and to "learn a new skill/technology" with a mean of 4.20. Improving job performance was the number one factor that influenced participants' decisions to enroll in professional development programs.

Research Objective 4 was to recommend a recruitment strategy for recruiting adults into professional development programs offered by the UVa-Wise OED. According to the data, 44 percent of participants (11) heard about UVa-Wise OED

professional development programs from their employer. Thirty-two percent (8) heard

about the programs via email. None of the participants indicated that they heard about our

programs through the newspaper or by word of mouth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions of this study, the researcher makes the following

recommendations:

1. The UVa-Wise OED should focus its efforts on developing training programs
   to help participants improve leadership skills at all experience levels and
   across industry segments.

2. The UVa-Wise OED should further explore the types of technology programs
   that are in demand in southwest Virginia and begin to develop and offer those
   programs so that area professionals can continuously update their skills.

3. The UVa-Wise OED should work to strengthen existing employer
   relationships and also develop new relationships to ensure that area employers
   are aware of the training opportunities that are available to their companies
   and employees.

4. The UVa-Wise OED should continue to utilize email marketing to promote
   OED programs. They should also identify strategies to encourage individuals
   to sign up for the mailing list.

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Factors that Influence Adults to Enroll in Profession Development Programs

Purpose: The purpose of this survey is to determine the factors that influence adults to enroll in professional development programs through the UVa-Wise Office of Economic Development.

Directions: Please complete the following questions by indicating the appropriate answer for each question or filling in the blank. Each question does require an answer.

1. I consent for the data collected in this survey to be used for the research study to determine the factors that influence adults to enroll in professional development programs though the UVa-Wise Office of Economic Development.
_____Yes   Date:

2. What is your gender? _____Male   _____Female

3. What is your age? _____

4. What is your highest level of education?
_____High School   _____ Some College _____Associate's Degree
_____Bachelor's Degree _____Graduate or Professional Degree

5. What is your occupation? _____

6. What is your level of experience?
_____Entry Level (1-5 years) _____Mid-Level (5 -10 years) _____Experienced (10+ years)

7. What is your level of managerial responsibility?
_____Team Leader _____Supervisor _____Manager _____Director _____VP or Above
_____I don't have management responsiblities

8. Directions: For each item, please indicate the level at which it influenced your decision to enroll in professional development courses through the UVa-Wise OED.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
Disagree	5	4	3	2
1				

Preparation for promotion	5	4	3	2	1
Company requirement	5	4	3	2	1
Supervisor encouraged me to enroll	5	4	3	2	1
Recommendation from HR	5	4	3	2	1
Training funds where available	5	4	3	2	1
Cost was affordable	5	4	3	2	1
To switch jobs/careers	5	4	3	2	1
Learn new skill/technology	5	4	3	2	1
Get away from office	5	4	3	2	1

Earn CEU's for certifications	5	4	3	2	1
For greater job security	5	4	3	2	1
To help me secure a job	5	4	3	2	1
Improve job performance	5	4	3	2	1
Personal satisfaction/Interest	5	4	3	2	1
To receive recognition	5	4	3	2	1

9. How did you hear about the UVa-Wise OED? _____ Newspaper _____Website _____Email

_____Social Media _____Employer _____Word of Mouth_____Other

10. What other programs would you be interested in taking that the UVa-Wise OED could offer?

_____Certification Prep _____HR _____Technology _____Leadership

_____Soft Skills _____Business Basics

Cover Letter

Dear Participant:

I am a graduate student at Old Dominion University. As part of my program requirements, I am conducting a research project to determine the factors that influence adults to enroll in professional development programs through The University of Virginia's College at Wise. This study is important to help UVa-Wise Office of Economic Development better serve the professionals in our region by better understanding their needs.

I am asking for your assistance in determining these factors by completing a short survey. Since the validity of the results depends on a high response rate, your participation in the survey is critical to the study.

Please click on the link provided below and spend a few minutes answering the questions in the survey. Please ensure that you select the informed consent box as the results are not valid if the box is unchecked.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RBZGY5J

Participation in this study is voluntary; you can elect not to participate. There are no risks or benefits to participants in the study. Your responses will remain anonymous and survey responses will be kept secure. All survey responses will be reported in aggregate with no identifying marks.

Thank you for taking the time to assist me in this data collection process. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at rstum003@odu.edu or (276) 210-1568.

Sincerely,

Rachel Patton   John Ritz
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