EXPLORING CONTEMPORARY MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES:
Rapid Achievement of Productivity for New Employees

UCSD EPSE-LAMP Student
Research Assignment 2006-07;
Combined Findings
THE ASSIGNMENT

- Understand the challenge – behaviors, processes or tools that achieve productivity for new employees more rapidly

- Interview at least two individuals
  - one manager with a reputation for quick assimilation of employees
  - one new employee

- Document findings, give personal analysis
  - Specifics – behaviors, processes, tools, experiences

- Provide summative insights/recommendations
INFORMATION RECEIVED

- Fifty-one papers
- Twenty-three companies
- Variety of approaches to the interview questions and methods of integrating analysis
COMBINED FINDINGS

- Organizational/Managerial Performance with Regard to the Challenge
  - Doing well 25%
  - Doing OK, but areas to improve 55%
  - Poorly done 20%

- Organizational/Managerial Responses to the Challenge:
  - Hiring/Selection/Pre-”Work” 35%
  - Training/Mentoring 60%
  - Knowledge Transfer Tools/Processes 5%
COMBINED FINDINGS

- **Hiring/Selection/Pre-”Work”**
  - Think through the position carefully beforehand; know what you are looking for (and how to assess it)
  - Not just technical knowledge, but “fit” with both the organizational culture and the needs of the specific project/program team (e.g., fit affects the speed of becoming productive)
  - The environment for work affects the speed of becoming productive (work station, co-workers, access to systems and information, etc.)
  - Seems to be an increasing preference for outgoing, self-initiating people
  - This becomes more important the more experience or ability you are looking for in a new employee
COMBINED FINDINGS

- **Hiring/Selection/Pre-“Work” Ideas**
  - Seldom find a perfect new employee (meets all the requirements), always a “gap” or two; don’t assign (early) tasks in the “gaps”, fill the “gaps” with help from work associates,
  - Big difference between integrating an experienced engineer and a new college graduate – prepare accordingly
  - “Pre-employment” efforts can make a big difference – student internships, college partnerships
  - Best way to get quick integration is to get someone fully qualified and experienced – aggressive recruitment, thorough assessment process
  - Have recent new hires help with new employee hiring interviews
COMBINED FINDINGS

Training/Mentoring

- People learn best by doing
  - “real” tasks, short-term deadlines and feedback, progressive complexity
  - long classes or lots of reading are not effective

- Must have someone to interact with
  - “buddy”, “mentor”, “peer”, “pair”
  - accessible and responsive (more important than formal workplace relationship – assigned mentors seldom work)
  - social/informal also very important (workplace colleagues)

- New employees like structure but managers like flexible, self-directed solutions
Training/Mentoring Ideas

- One manager gave “homework”
- “Take an engineer to work” day
- “Associate Engineer Program”
- Two levels or orientation – corporate and program
- Scheduled feedback sessions with someone outside of the employees department
- Have new employees participate in customer or other types of meetings (even though they can’t contribute much)
- “New Hire Integration Plan”

- New employee networking group
- Have new employees use the company products and attend product review meetings
- Use Instant Messenger for quick questions
- Pay attention to employee’s learning modality; tailor their integration plan
- Work group and corporate culture are different; need different orientations and integration activities
COMBINED FINDINGS

- **Knowledge Transfer Tools/Processes**
  - Transition planning is valued, but seldom done well
    - Documentation (including timely updates)
    - Backup/transition training and assignments
  - Knowledge databases are “hit and miss”
    - Sensitive to the type of work/industry?
  - Ironically; the more rapidly the company/industry is changing, the more need there is to record and share knowledge, but the less opportunity there is to do so
    - Structured processes break down
    - Internal wiki
  - Routine cross-training is almost impossible