

Establishing Essentials in Professional Development

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Abstract

The New Horizons Agency is an essential voice in educational services associated with autistic children. This educational feature of the organization will be the functional framework of this study. The agency is well-respected in mentoring governmental groups and driving the direction of policy for the treatment of autistic children. Communication is critical for optimal operation at New Horizons, and the forms of communication can sometimes be difficult to navigate. Therefore, training on how to use certain forms of communication are essential. Equally important is a development process for staff to reflect on how they are progressing in the learning of organizational policies on using various modes of communication.

Keywords: Policies • Demonstration • Cultural awareness • Collaborate • Horizons • Congruent competencies

Introduction

As the scholar-practitioner for New Horizons, I think it is necessary to establish a Professional Development Plan (PDP) that can assist employees in tracking their progress toward specific organizational standards of elements that should be addressed or enhanced as staff serves their clients, and a series of learning activities to assess progress. The professional development plan will assist staff in their reflection on product knowledge, facilitating information about educational services, communications, demonstration of leadership, and cultural awareness.

Problem Classification

The primary research question is: "Can a professional development plan and assessment process impact organizational learning and growth?" Through the professional development process, assessments, leadership, and feedback, an employee of New Horizons can reflect on organizational policies and procedures they have addressed, actions to reach developmental they have taken goals, evidence of outcomes, and resources they may need to continue to improve. Issues such as social media usage could be evaluated by implementing an effective professional development plan and assessment module so employees can reflect on how well they understand agency guidelines on using social media and opportunities for improvement.

A good PDP is not just the responsibility of a human resource department but should be in the DNA of the whole organization. Professional development should be an intrinsic part of standard operating procedures. Part of the issues with social media usage in this organization is the lack of professional development in this area. Leadership teams that support professional development of personnel can ensure triumphant long-term service for the agency. A PDP should not be a once a year appraisal. A PDP can help to establish training and developmental needs. PDPs should focus on the following:

- Congruent competencies
- Specialized competencies

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- Informal and formal assessments
- Continual education programs (internal and external)
- Understanding professional and ethical guidelines

Characteristics of organizational problems

Since New Horizons has no formal professional development module for employees, it is difficult to evaluate how employees are progressing toward specific goals, such as proper usage of social media as a communication tool for reaching clients concerning the education and treatment of autistic children.

Seguin suggested a professional development program for nurses to address clinical problems and increase employee retention. The purpose of this program was to have active staff nurses establish, direct, and reflect on their practices for developing leadership, increasing knowledge, facilitate learning to help new nurses and to reflect on their practice. Seguin implied that the professional development plan helped their organization reduce time to obtain electrocardiograms for patients, decrease the likelihood of triage bottlenecks, which delay critical treatments, increased nursing staff empowerment, and retention. A well-organized professional development plan can serve New Horizons in the same capacity for management, education, administration, communication, and agency guidelines [1].

Lovering suggested social media could be a powerful tool for business. However, establishing a professional plan for employees is necessary to avoid the negative effects of social media. Lovering implied that two of the most considerable problems with improper uses of social media are tracking negative or misleading statements and accidental dispensation of confidential information. Tracking negative or misleading statements can be an enormous problem for companies, with social media it can be an added burden. However, training employees on policies and procedures associated with social media can help to prevent this problem. Using a professional development plan and assessments can help to reinforce the guidelines and allow for the employee to reflect on how well they understand and utilize best practice in using social media [2].

Unauthorized employees speaking on the agencies behalf is another difficult area to monitor for companies. The improper uses of social media make it even more challenging. A greater dependence on social media can bring with it an array of organizational concerns. Nevertheless, a professional development plan can help to create a mindset with employees concerning ethical guidance for the usage of social media associated with company issues [2].

Action research to appraise professional development plan usage

With the advancements of a professional development plan (PDP), it will be essential to formulate a general action research process to collect data. This process can be essential to evaluate how the PDP is working and how effective

Figure 1. The Glossary on Education Reform (2015) is a comprehensive resource outlet to assist educators with learning programs.

Action research	Professional development plan
Classify a problem to be studied	Identify development opportunities
Collection of data concerning the problem	Produce options to address opportunities
Analyze and interpret data	Assess feedback from observations or assessments
Develop a plan to approach the problem	Collaborate with other professionals on development
Carry out the plan	Implement development plan strategies
Assess the results of actions taken	Re-evaluate development plan
Categorize any new problem	Attend training activities for further development
Repeat/Reflect	Reflect on practice

it is in establishing awareness for organizational problems, and a method for employees to assess and reflect on evidence concerning their progression toward a better understanding and efficient usage of organizational information [3].

Yigit and Bagceci evaluated the contributions of action research to teachers’ professional development. The professional development was essential for organizational goals and policies. The study consisted of six educators that appraised the usage of action research in professional development. Establishing an effective PDP is a significant factor to ensure the efficiency of improvements at any level. Yigit and Bagceci suggested that a development plan can help professionals assist clients to improve their skills, realize their potential, and acquire knowledge. It is essential that employees have the confidence, skills, and awareness to reach professional goals. A productive PDP can help to affirm this process at New Horizons. The researchers suggested that the teachers in their study conveyed that action research had a productive impact on their professional development in the following ways:

- Knowledge of field
- Discipline
- Positive impact on learners
- Methodologies
- Conscious of actions
- Job description

Yigit and Bagceci suggested that action research is a cycle of inquiry. This cycle of action can be used to identify problems or weaknesses. The action research approach coordinates well with a PDP. The chart below compares the steps involved in both general action research and professional development action steps: With New Horizons’ concerns about the uses of social media, it is essential that an action research study be utilized to collect data on how a PDP and assessment process will serve the agency’s needs with this matter.

Castro-Garcés and Martínez-Granada suggested that action research focuses on driving change in a context study. The collection of data in an action research approach begins with a question that leads to an investigation and establishing techniques for collecting data. Once the data is collected, it must be interpreted to develop and implement an action plan to address the problem. The researchers implied it would be essential to appraise the current plan to assess new problems. Then the most important part of the process, reflection [3,4].

The reflection process should involve the following questions:

- What does the data tell us?
- What changes could be instituted?

The action research approach is a cyclical process to ensure an ongoing enrichment mechanism to engage problems and information to enact change. Using an action research design for collecting data is an appropriate methodology process to pilot this study because it will allow the staff at New Horizons to be co-researchers and focus on realizing practical solutions to

developmental and communication issues within the agency. Green and Huntington used an action research approach to collect data in the public healthcare environment to determine a best practice approach in providing safe and effective interventions for clients. The participants in the action research model worked in small professional development communities to classify potential professional development subject matter (social media) and the development of an online learning lesson program for employees. After the staff had taken the online learning activities, the activity would be evaluated to identify areas of learning needs. The key feature of this cyclical process is that information that is obtained from the online assessments could be used to create other learning activities. The feedback that is communicated to the staff will allow them to reflect on their knowledge and opportunities for improvement [5].

Solution-based on data collection

The proposal to use an effective action research learning process can be very valuable to New Horizons. Huh, Lee suggested that action learning distinguishes itself from other learning methods in that necessitate learners to take actions centered on project outcomes. During implementing a solution based on data collection, and reflecting on the ramifications of their actions, the learners are given more opportunities for improvement through learning activities. This solution-based approach has many benefits it encompasses a multifaceted process and a higher level of participation from staff members [6].

The goal in the solution process is to enable staff to be able to collaborate with researchers, establish agendas, build solutions to opportunities for improvements they have identified, and improve their professional progression in an ethical method. The Glossary of Education Reform suggested evaluating our solution based on data collection [6].

We will guide the process by these five learning-centered questions:

- What do employees need to know?
- How will we know that they have obtained it?
- How will they acquire the learning?
- What is the next step if they didn’t learn it?
- How will we enrich the learning if they already know it?

(These questions will be the focus during all phases of the online learning activities).

Evaluating the solution

Elwyn and Hocking suggested that a professional development plan (PDP) will only increase when a support system is established for general purposes to establish best practices. However, PDPs are only the beginning of the process. Practitioners should conceptually the uses of this approach as their chance to learn how to learn, to adopt the organizational guidelines, and develop an approach that can be reproduced for future challenges. PDPs will work best where there is effective leadership within an organization. The leadership team should be able to communicate the importance and relevance of the program [7-9].

Conclusion

For New Horizons, a professional development plan accompanied with a way to track progress is essential for the mission of the organization. In today's competitive markets there is little room for miscommunication. Social media can be an effective form for communicating with clients and relaying information to various groups. However, it is critical that employees understand the purpose of policies, procedures, and ethical responsibilities in using social media as a form of communication. New Horizons is not in the business of restricting freedom of speech, but it is important that employees understand company guidelines and take responsibility for what they communicate. Professional development plans and assessment tools can ensure that employees can track their development with this matter and any other issues that might arise. Using action research can be essential in building from the past, taking place in the present, with a goal of developing the future.

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