

CASE STUDY

IMPACT OF SIMULATION TRAINING ON CALL CENTER AGENT PERFORMANCE

CONDUCTED BY

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Hypothesis: Role-Play and Simulation Training:

In this study conducted by the Georgia Institute of Technology, their hypothesis was designed to see if behavior modeling training would produce higher results if conducted via face to face role-play vs. self-paced simulation.

Specifically in role-playing training, participants observe the instructor and /or fellow trainees, perform a behavior and then re-enact it themselves. Typically feedback is given by the instructor or other classmates.

Realistic simulation based scenarios were debated as to whether or not they can present the self-paced "role-play" in a stronger more true to life environment, therefor, leading to a superior transfer of skills and behaviors.

To test their theory, they selected a call center in the packaging distribution business which handles customer service calls regarding delivery and tracking of packages. The normal training for new agents is six days of classroom instruction for a combination of cultural, product and business process training. Next, the remaining time is spent in the classroom training on ten call scenarios.

Background training

- Instructors provide introduction to the firm, its culture, and HR procedures. They familiarize trainees with the firm's products, business process, customer service etiquette and details of the computer system used to handle calls
- Each participant responds to a printed pre-training survey questionnaire.

Call Scenarios training

- An experienced instructor provides details on the 10 most common scenarios that trainees will encounter on their jobs
- Instructors use flow charts and Power-Point presentation for each call scenario to provide the purpose and specifics of each call. Instructor demonstrates the screens to be navigated and the fields where information is to be entered.
- Trainees have computers in front of them so they can witness the screens and fields
- Instructors provide trainees with an enhanced script. Trainees have access to the enhanced scripts at all times during the classroom instruction. They use the script to learn how to respond to a customer query.
- This marks the end of common training per the training procedures at firm A. The trainees next move to the practice phase that constitutes the last component of training, during which, they participate in rehearsals on five pre-specified call scenarios. An hour and a half is allocated for this phase. Both the simulation and role-play trainees practice the same five call scenarios.

Practice Phase

Role-Play Trainees

- Continue to have access to computers and the scripts for each of the five call scenarios
- Observer instructors role-play each scenario, including navigation of screens and fields that were projected on a screen
- Next, each scenario is role-played thrice in a sequential manner. An instructor plays the role of the customer and the trainees plays the role of the agent
- While a role-play is in progress, trainees get to follow the role-playing agent's key strokes because they are projected onto a screen. They also use the scripts to identify errors as they follow along
- Instructor points out the right course of action when mistakes are made. Trainees are encouraged to clarify any doubts pertaining to the call scenario.
- Thus each trainee observes, talks, and/or navigates the screens and fields for each call scenario four times.

Simulation trainees

- **Trainees do not have access to the scripts**
- The following steps are repeated for each of the five call scenarios:
 - Paced observation: Trainees seated at the computer terminal with headset observe a model call. Trainees pace (step) through the call once.
 - Modularized practice and feedback; Next, trainees go through the call in a modularized mode once - while the trainee handles the keystrokes. The computer prompts the correct action in case of a mistake.
 - Integrated practice with feedback: Lastly, each trainee practices the entire call (once) wherein the computer prompts the correct action in case of a mistake.
- Thus, each trainee observes, talks, and /or navigates the screens and fields for each call scenario four times.

Post-Training Results

- Post training **call duration**, on average, was at least **13% shorter** for agents trained with the simulator
- Among the six call scenarios measured; the maximum mean reduction was 22% – from 215 seconds for the conventional group to 168 seconds for the simulation group – a reduction of 47 seconds, than for the group trained with conventional role playing.
- The Simulation group handled post training calls more pleasantly.
- Participants in the simulator group scored 8% higher correct responses than participants trained with role playing methods

In Summary

Simulation based training provides more uniform results when taking perceived usefulness into account.

Agents from both groups who rated the usefulness of their training favorably processed calls faster after training, as opposed to agents who gave less favorable evaluations.

In the **simulation** group, those agents giving the lowest “usefulness” ratings still performed faster than agents from the traditional group who gave high marks to their training.