

Sample Case Summary

Executive Summary

Great Gardens is an award winning mid-sized urban landscaping company. It has a number of important competitive advantages including a talented design and management team, a loyal client base and a number of highly skilled long-term employees who have helped to keep the company growing. It consists of both gardening and installation teams. Its long-term objectives include business growth and development, expanded client base, people and culture development, and continued reputational excellence in sustainable gardening design and practice.

Problem Statement

The company is well positioned for continued growth though employee turnover has stressed managerial resources as constant onboarding and retraining are time intensive and therefore costly. New employees arrive with very different skill and experience levels and inconsistent prior training. Some need entry level training, some need retraining, and all need an orientation to the company and exposure to standard operating procedures upon arrival.

Problem Analysis

Like many skilled trades, the field has very specific accident and injury related risks which make both people and property vulnerable (use of power tools, heavy lifting, changing weather conditions, sloping terrain, use of company vehicles, etc.). Following review of existing onboarding and training strategies, task analysis, needs assessment, field observation and interviews, a causal loop has appeared to develop. Turnover stresses current onboarding and training resources, lack of targeted training creates knowledge, skill and communication gaps, gaps create performance risk, risks create performance vulnerabilities, vulnerabilities lead to accidents, accidents impact productivity and morale which leads to turnover.

Recommended Solution

Busy managers and crew leaders with limited time to train new employees would benefit from a formal on-boarding program that includes improved skill and knowledge assessment and safety training. A related redesign of the performance appraisal process would also help reinforce new competencies. The learning objectives for new employees are to 1) improve entry level skill assessment 2) address identified gaps through targeted training. For existing employees 1) improve crew communication and collaboration to onboard more effectively and 2) ensure all employees have exposure to the same safety training and expectations. The long-term desired business outcomes are to 1) save managerial time and resources 2) save training time and funds 3) reduce incident reports 4) reduce turnover and 5) improve overall productivity.

Revised On-boarding

- Move on-boarding content from a paper handbook to a blended learning format using Articulate 360 (as this platform has an interactive feature and learners can train remotely before they begin work). Elevate the role of crew leaders to “lead trainers” to reinforce learning in the field. Offer training in both English and Spanish to better meet learner profile needs and use informal and social learning to support behavioral change.
- Use safety training as the first and core on-boarding module to ensure compliance and reduce the possibility of injury and accident. Add additional modules over time.

Begin Global Safety Assessment of New and Current Employees, Retrain for “safety mindset”

- Assess pre and post safety related competencies to identify and address knowledge and skill gaps more effectively. This will result in more targeted training and ensure common standards are met. It could also better expose risk if gaps are identified earlier.
- Broaden and expand safety training from discrete “how to” practices to more global “safety mindset” specific competencies that improve teamwork and communication. This creates more shared responsibility for safety and elevates every employee’s ability to create and maintain safe working conditions.

Revise Performance Appraisal Process

- Use the new competency-based framework to evaluate employee performance and reward learning and behavioral change.

Incentivize Safety Compliance

- Consider incentivizing and rewarding adherence to safety protocols and practices and work toward a culture of continuous learning and injury and accident-free days as a company goal.

Financial Overview

It is [estimated](#) that losses associated with retraining and high turnover exceed \$10,000 annually not including costs associated with increased insurance and liability. Short-term investments needed to develop a new on-boarding program by contracting with an instructional designer and acquiring related software (estimated at \$2,000 to \$4,000) could potentially result in significant long-term savings.

Implementation Timeline

Project from start to finish (depending on agreed upon scope and SME availability) could be as short as four to six weeks with the deliverable of a fully functional high-level safety related on-boarding program. Approximately 20 hours of managerial time will be needed to create, review and approve training content.

Conclusion

Based on the overall company profile and ability to grow, investments in training make sense. A high-quality instructional program for all employees and better performance metrics will help position the company competitively and help mature it from small business to corporate training standards and strengthen its unique identity and culture.