

Design and Implementation of Cross-Functional Training to Improve Team Collaboration

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ABSTRACT

Cross-functional training has been recognized as one of the effective methods to improve team collaboration and organizational performance. In the increasingly complex world of work, where team members have different professional backgrounds and expertise, cross-functional training serves as a bridge to strengthen communication and synergy between departments. The training is designed to provide a deeper understanding of the processes and challenges faced by different functions within the organization. Through collaborative learning, team members are expected to work more efficiently, overcome barriers to decision-making, and increase overall team productivity. The success of cross-functional training is inseparable from proper training design, including the selection of materials, facilitators, and sustainable evaluation. Organizations should ensure that these trainings are not just held as one-time events, but also as part of a culture of continuous development. Effective cross-functional training has the potential to lead to significantly improved organizational performance, strengthen collaboration between teams, and accelerate the achievement of business goals. Proper planning and execution of cross-functional training is key to improving team performance in the long-term.

INTRODUCTION

Cross-functional training has evolved into an important component of human resource development in many organizations. This training is designed to broaden employees' understanding and skills beyond their primary job functions, so that they can be more flexible and adaptive in dealing with business dynamics. In an increasingly complex era of globalization, organizations face a variety of challenges that require them to not only rely on individual expertise in one area, but also strengthen cross-functional collaboration capabilities. Cross-functional training is an important investment to create a resilient and multifunctional workforce. Cross-functional skills possessed by employees, such as more effective inter-departmental communication and the skill to understand multiple perspectives, can improve synergy within the organization (Pimenta et al., 2014). Cross-functional training can play an important role in facilitating understanding between different departments, leading to improved team performance (Parker et al., 2014).

In larger and more complex organizations, there is often a clear separation between functions, such as marketing, finance, and human resources. Each of these functions has different strategic and operational objectives, so it is not uncommon for miscommunication or gaps in understanding to arise between units. When each department is too focused on its own goals without understanding the contributions of other functions, it can hinder the overall coordination and efficiency of the organization. Cross-functional training aims to give employees greater insight into how work processes in other departments work and how these functions interact with each other in support of organizational goals. This allows individuals to develop skills that are not only specific to their own job, but also helps them understand how their work relates to the work of other departments. This broader knowledge of different functions is expected to foster improved collaboration, communication and overall team performance (Devine et al., 2012). Cross-functional training is key in building a team that is more solid, adaptive, and ready to face the complexities of modern organizations.

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The implementation of cross-functional training does not always go smoothly, and many organizations encounter various barriers in optimizing its benefits. One of these is resistance from employees to changes in the way of working or shifts in focus caused by cross-functional training. This training often requires individuals to step out of their comfort zone and adopt new perspectives or ways of working that are different from their daily habits. Differences in work culture between departments and the perception that cross-functional training can reduce efficiency in daily work can be significant barriers. Some employees may feel that they do not have the time or need to understand the work of their colleagues from other functions, especially if the training is perceived as not directly related to their job (Harrison & Rainer, 2013). As a result, cross-functional training is often seen as an additional burden rather than a development opportunity.

As the importance of teamwork improves in the digital age and interconnectivity improves, organizations are faced with the need to create teams that are more integrated, flexible and able to adapt rapidly to change. This makes cross-functional training even more relevant. A better understanding of roles and responsibilities outside of their department can increase mutual trust and improve collaboration between teams. Organizations need to ensure that cross-functional training is conducted in a way that supports the culture of the organization and is mindful of the challenges that may arise, especially with regard to time, cost, and sustainability (Zhu & Lee, 2014). Cross-functional training can be a transformative tool that strengthens an organization's resilience and competitiveness in the face of the evolving digital age.

While many organizations are aware of the benefits of cross-functional training, implementation is often challenging. One of the main issues is uncertainty regarding the best way to implement cross-functional training that can deliver maximum results. Every company has a different structure, culture, and goals, so there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Limited resources are also a significant barrier to the implementation of ideal cross-functional training. Not all organizations have sufficient resources or infrastructure to support cross-functional training effectively. In many cases, this training tends to be seen as an additional burden on employee time and resources, rather than an integral part of the development of sustainable skills (Liao et al., 2016). They may be reluctant to attend training that is perceived as having no direct impact on their work, especially if the results are not immediately visible or are not integrated with the performance evaluation system.

Another challenge is employee resistance to the concept of cross-functional training. Some employees may feel that cross-functional training interferes with their focus on their primary works, or they may feel that working with teams from other departments will make their jobs more difficult. A lack of understanding about the direct benefits of cross-functional training, especially in improving individual and team performance, can be a barrier to its implementation. Clear information delivery and a communicative approach so that the benefits of training can be understood and accepted by all levels of employees. Poor communication issues between departments can also be a barrier to improving the effectiveness of cross-functional training (Yu & Hang, 2018). If the relationship between functions in the organization is not harmonious or is used to working separately, then cooperation in training will be awkward and less effective.

Another obstacle that often exists is the difficulty in assessing the effectiveness of cross-functional training. While many organizations consider cross-departmental collaboration important, not all organizations have the right tools or methodologies to evaluate the impact of this training on individual and team performance. This can lead to training programs being viewed as a cost burden rather than a strategic investment. Without a clear evaluation mechanism in place, organizations may struggle to know the extent to which cross-functional training contributes to the achievement of overall organizational goals (Wang & Li, 2015). As a result, cross-functional training is difficult to strategically tailor to be more relevant and efficient.

Observing and understanding the implementation of cross-functional training is critical given the role collaboration plays in the success of today's organizations. In the rapidly changing world of work, the skill to work cross-functionally is a key factor in driving better team performance. Identifying effective ways of designing and implementing cross-functional training can help organizations to not only overcome challenges, but also optimize the potential of team collaboration, improve communication, and ultimately achieve organizational goals more effectively.

The purpose of this study is to identify the most effective methods of designing and implementing cross-functional training that can improve team collaboration and individual performance in organizations. This study aims to provide useful recommendations for organizations that want to optimize cross-functional training to achieve better team performance by examining the best practices and barriers faced in the implementation of cross-functional training.

RESEARCH METHOD

To analyze how cross-functional training can improve team collaboration and performance, a literature review approach is one of the most effective methods. The literature review makes it possible to collect and analyze findings from various studies relevant to the topic, thus providing a comprehensive picture of the application and outcomes of cross-functional training in an organizational context. Previous studies have shown that cross-functional training can strengthen communication between departments, improve understanding of each team's responsibilities and tasks, and promote synergy in the workplace (Salas et al., 2015). Through this literature study, it is possible to understand how cross-functional training contributes to creating a more collaborative and effective work environment, as well as maximizing team performance in the face of complex organizational challenges.

The literature study also provided insights into the various methodologies used in implementing cross-functional training. Some study suggests applying case-based or simulation training methods to improve employee engagement in the learning process and deepen their understanding of processes that take place outside their own function (Cross et al., 2016). In this regard, a study of the existing literature can also reveal challenges that arise in the implementation of cross-functional training, such as cultural differences between departments or difficulties in measuring the success of such training. By understanding these aspects through the literature study, organizations can design more effective and targeted cross-functional training according to the team's performance needs and organizational goals.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In an increasingly complex and global organizational environment, collaboration between teams from different functions is crucial. One way to strengthen this collaboration is through cross-functional training, which focuses on developing individual skills and interactions between team members from different departments. This training not only serves to improve technical knowledge, but also to enrich team members' understanding of how to collaborate more effectively (Santa et al., 2011). This kind of collaboration is critical in accelerating innovation, improving responsiveness to market changes, and creating more holistic solutions to complex problems. In many cases, the skill to work cross-functionally can affect the quality of decisions made as well as the speed of problem solving, which in turn impacts overall organizational performance (Mohamed et al., 2004).

Cross-functional training is not something that can simply be implemented without careful planning. Designing and implementing effective training requires a structured approach tailored to the specific needs of the organization (Slomp & Molleman, 2002). From setting clear objectives, selecting the right materials, to using competent facilitators, every element in training must be carefully considered for optimal results. Proehl (2013) emphasized that organizations should also ensure that training is not only short-term, but also sustainable to ensure consistent skill development across the team.

Overall, it is important to emphasize that well-designed cross-functional training can contribute significantly to improved team collaboration and organizational performance. Through a better understanding of the different departments and roles within the organization, team members can more easily work together to achieve common goals. This not only enriches individual experiences, but also has a broader positive impact on the organization's success in facing challenges (Kalabina & Belyak, 2020).

To effectively improve team collaboration and performance, organizations need to design and implement well-structured cross-functional training. Cross-functional training aims to increase understanding between different departments in the organization. By engaging team members from different functions, it provides an opportunity to share insights and improve skills that can help solve problems more effectively. According to Dyer et al. (2013), cross-functional training can facilitate a deeper understanding of how each part of the organization operates and is interconnected, which in turn strengthens synergies among teams with different backgrounds.

One of the first steps in designing effective cross-functional training is to set clear and measurable objectives. Without specific objectives, training will lose focus and its potential benefits will not be optimized. The organization should understand the specific needs it wants to achieve from the training, whether in terms of interdepartmental collaboration or improved team performance. Setting clear objectives will provide focused direction for participants and minimize confusion. It is also important to monitor progress. For example, an organization might set goals to improve communication between teams or speed up the decision-making process by engaging multiple functional perspectives. This is also consistent with the findings presented by Campion et al. (2011), who emphasized that clear objectives are important to ensure cross-functional training is successful.

After setting the goals, the organization needs to design training content that covers various operational and cultural aspects of each function. In this case, the training materials should be relevant to the challenges faced by each function in the organization. One method that can be used is simulating real-world situations that engage collaboration between members from different departments to solve problems together. Burke et al. (2006) showed that real-world simulations in cross-functional training can improve problem-solving and collaboration skills. Organizations should create a safe and supportive training environment, where participants feel comfortable to share ideas, voice opinions, and learn from each other.

It is important for organizations to choose a trainer or facilitator who can create a collaborative climate, in addition to the comprehensive design of training materials. A skilled facilitator can help maintain healthy group dynamics and ensure that every voice is heard. Experienced facilitators can utilize techniques such as group discussions, role plays, or joint problem-solving sessions to encourage active collaboration among participants. Based on the findings by Tannenbaum et al. (2012), effective facilitators can help strengthen relationships among team members and build mutual trust, which is crucial in cross-functional collaboration.

To facilitate collaboration, organizations should encourage open and transparent communication during cross-functional training. Effective communication allows participants to share relevant information, experiences and knowledge with each other. Resources such as digital communication platforms, discussion forums, or technology-based collaboration tools can support this process. According to Hinds et al. (2011), the use of appropriate communication tools can improve the effectiveness of cross-team collaboration, as team members can communicate in real-time and respond rapidly to issues that arise.

More practical and applicable training methods can also be considered, such as mentoring or job rotation. Through this approach, team members can directly apply the skills they learn from cross-functional training in everyday work situations. In this case, members from one function may be given the opportunity to work with teams from other functions on specific projects, allowing them to gain first-hand experience in cross-functional collaboration. Zaccaro et al. (2001) point out that hands-on experience on the job can accelerate understanding and skill improvement in a cross-functional context.

After the implementation of training, organizations need to conduct an evaluation to assess the success of the program. This evaluation can be done through measuring team performance and interdepartmental collaboration after the training is completed. Evaluation may include performance surveys, interviews with participants, or analysis of changes in decision-making and interdepartmental workflows. For example, a study by Alliger et al. (1997) found that a comprehensive post-training evaluation can provide useful insights into the extent to which training was successful in improving team performance and collaboration.

Not only that, but organizations also need to support sustainable skills development after cross-functional training. Training should be viewed as a sustainable process, not just a one-time event. It is important for organizations to provide follow-up training and continuous learning opportunities. According to Salas et al. (2015), continuous and repeated training can improve team engagement and effectiveness in the long-term.

Thus, for cross-functional training to provide maximum benefits, organizations need to design training that covers not only technical skills but also interpersonal and collaboration aspects. Given that conflicts or misunderstandings can arise due to differences in culture or understanding between functions, training should be equipped with elements that encourage participants to learn how to communicate more effectively and respect differences. As Earley and Mosakowski (2004) explain, training that prioritizes the development of emotional and cultural intelligence can prevent conflict in Organizations should also consider the aspect of diversity in cross-functional teams. Diverse cultures, communication styles and work approaches can affect the way team members interact and collaborate. Cross-functional training should take diversity factors into account and help participants to understand and appreciate these differences. Stahl et al. (2010) showed that teams that manage diversity well perform better in terms of innovation and problem solving.

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Organizations should also pay special attention to post-training feedback mechanisms, in addition to cultural diversity. Constructive feedback from facilitators or fellow participants is important to identify areas for improvement and to measure achievements. This process allows participants to develop deeper skills and apply lessons learned in their daily work. As noted by London and Smither (1999), effective feedback can improve self-awareness and interpersonal skills, which are important for successful cross-functional collaboration.

In designing and implementing cross-functional training, organizations need to be flexible in their approach. Given that individuals have different learning styles, it is important for organizations to tailor training methods to the needs of participants. Technology can be used to deliver training that is more flexible and accessible anytime and anywhere, which is especially useful for organizations with teams spread across different locations. Glover et al. (2007) showed that the use of technology in training can improve the flexibility and affordability of cross-functional training.

Finally, to maximize the effectiveness of cross-functional training in improving team performance, organizations need to create a culture that supports collaboration. A culture that is inclusive and open to innovation will strengthen the outcomes of cross-functional training. Cross-functional training is not only a means of improving technical skills, but also a medium to strengthen collaborative values in the organization. Creating a work culture that supports cross-functional collaboration should be an organization's top priority in any employee development initiative.

The success of cross-functional training depends largely on how the organization designs and implements it with attention to various supportive factors, such as proper participant selection, relevant teaching, and continuous evaluation. With the right training design, organizations can encourage more effective collaboration among teams with different backgrounds and functions. This can reduce potential conflicts caused by a lack of understanding between functions and facilitate more efficient goal achievement.

Keep in mind that cross-functional training should be considered as part of a sustainable process that engages continuous skill development. Organizations should not think of it as a one-off activity, but rather should foster a deep culture of collaboration at every level. The success of this training will be reflected in higher team performance, more innovation and significantly improved business results, ultimately strengthening the organization's competitiveness in the evolving marketplace.

Organizations can ensure that they not only improve individual skills by designing effective and sustainable cross-functional training, but also create more integrated and productive teams. This is especially important in an increasingly dynamic business world, where the skill to adapt and collaborate rapidly is one of the keys to surviving and thriving in the global marketplace.

CONCLUSION

Well-designed and implemented cross-functional training can improve collaboration between teams and improve overall organizational performance. Engaging cross-functional team members in a single training enhances understanding of other departments' tasks and challenges. This opens up opportunities for better communication, increased synergy in achieving common goals, and reduced barriers in the decision-making process. The success of this training also depends on the organization's commitment to ensuring that training is not a one-off, but becomes part of a continuous learning culture that encourages consistent skill development.

To achieve optimal results, organizations need to ensure that cross-functional training is tailored to the specific needs of the team and the long-term goals of the organization. It is important for organizations to design training that emphasizes not only on understanding technical skills but also on developing interpersonal skills and teamwork. Continuous evaluation of training effectiveness, both through performance measurement and participant feedback, is also crucial to ensure that the training program continues to evolve and meet expectations. In the long-term, successful cross-functional training will bring significant benefits to increasingly complex and collaboration-oriented organizations.

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