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Title: ***The Importance of Training in Employee Quality of Work***

The accompanying research report is submitted to the **University of Wisconsin-Stout**, **Graduate School** in partial completion of the requirements for the

Graduate Degree/ Major: MS Training and Human Resource Development

Research Advisor: Richard Herling, Program Director

Submission Term/Year: Summer 2019

Number of Pages: 35

Style Manual Used: American Psychological Association, 6th edition

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Abstract

Company XYZ has added a new election period named OEP, and the requirements for using this election period have not been made clear to the 25 application processors in the Medicare and Retirement department. Errors are being made when utilizing OEP, causing delays in member enrollment. The goal of the study was to research the current training module for OEP and document what the shortcomings may have been. There were three processes for the data collection and data analysis in this study which were a problems/needs assessment, task analysis and a gap analysis to find any barriers for transfer of learning evident with the current OEP training. The barriers to the transfer of learning discovered were that the current OEP training lacked in defined objectives, knowledge testing and effective learning materials. These barriers are strong indicators why the current OEP training had failed for the Medicare and Retirement department.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Company XYZ is an insurance company that offers a wide range of medical insurance plans including employer, individual, and Medicare. As a medical insurance company, Company XYZ must follow the standards and regulations set by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) to be compliant with government regulations. The Medicare and Retirement department handle Medicare supplement insurance for those eligible for Medicare or that have special circumstances such as a chronic illness.

The employees of Company XYZ's clients, referred to as enrollees, are able to apply for Medicare supplement plans October through December. The time period between October 15th and December 7th is known as the Annual Enrollment Period (AEP). This is when the application processors of the Medicare and Retirement department experience large increases in Medicare supplement plan applications and is the company's busiest time of year.

For enrollees that wish to apply for coverage outside of AEP, a valid reason is needed to apply which is known as an election period. Each application needs to include a valid election period, otherwise the application will be denied. This is due to CMS which is a government run program that sets the standards and regulations for when and how people can enroll into Medicare, Medicaid, and supplement plans.

Besides the AEP there are many different election periods enrollees may use to apply for insurance coverage, depending on the situation the enrollee is currently in. Although there are many election periods, each election period has specific requirements that need to be met in order for enrollees to utilize them.

As of January 1st, 2019, CMS created a new election period that is available for enrollees to utilize outside of AEP. This new election period is called Open Enrollment Period (OEP).

Although it sounds similar to AEP, there are different requirements that are needed to use this election period. The Medicare and Retirement department of Company XYZ has struggled with understanding the requirements of OEC, as evidenced by an immediate decrease in department's performance records. Since the implementation of OEP, the team's quality rating has decreased from 98% average over the previous year to 91% average for the first quarter of 2019.

Statement of the Problem

Company XYZ has added a new election period named OEP and as evidenced by the increase number of application processing errors made by the Medicare and Retirement department, the requirements for using this new election period have not been made clear to the 25 application processors in the Medicare and Retirement department. Errors made when utilizing OEP cause delays in member enrollment, resulting in additional costs associated with correcting errors to enrollee applications and have the potential to create several issues for the company beginning with enrollees not being enrolled in coverage in a timely manner, enrollees temporarily losing coverage and benefits, and enrollees switching their coverage to other insurance providers.

The Medicare and Retirement department applications team strives for 100% quality each quarter, meaning zero processing errors. Since the implementation of OEP, the team's quality has decreased from 98% average over the previous year to 91% average for the first quarter of 2019. Each application processor can process approximately 1,000 applications per month. Although all members in the department received training on the new OEP requirements, a drop in the department's quality rating from 98% to 91%, averages out to approximately ten errors a month per application processor in the first quarter of 2019. This suggests that while some individuals may have mastered the new OEP requirements the greater majority have not.

External factors that could be contributing to the decrease in the department's quality rating include the two new hires that began in February and thus did not participate in the original training. These new hires were given training on OEP, but it was included in their complete new hire training which occurred five months after the training of the senior team members. Another external factor has been changes to the requirements of OEP since the team had been trained in September 2018 on OEP. The original requirements have been amended a total of four times since the training in September, adding to or revising specific requirements. These announced changes have not been updated in the training materials that the team was given as part of the initial training.

The training program given in September of 2018 was administered in a meeting room by the Medicare and Retirement department SME. Although the training was in a meeting room, three trainees of the team are telecommuters who work from home. These three trainees called in using a program called Webex, and were able to listen and view the training on their own computers. The training occurred one time and was approximately an hour in length. The training was administered through Power Point and each trainee received a copy of the Power Point to reference. The trainees were not tested or evaluated in any way following the completion of the training.

Purpose of the Study

The Medicare and Retirement department had received training regarding the new OEP requirements and documented announcements of changes made to the requirements but, as demonstrated by the department's quality rating, continue to make errors when using the new election period. It is the general perception that the decrease in department performance can be attributed directly to ineffective training. The goal of the study was to revisit and review the

current training module for OEP and to identify and document possible factors contributing to training ineffectiveness. The question this study attempted to answer is:

> *What barriers may have, or currently, exist in the design and delivery of Company XYZ's OEP training program that was or possibly still is preventing it from effectively developing the knowledge and skills required by members of the Medicare and Retirement department to minimize OEP processing errors?*

To guide the study the following sub-questions were used.

- Sub-Question 1: What, if any, barriers to the transfer of learning are inherent in the design of the current OEP training program.
- Sub-Question 2: What, if any, barriers to the transfer of learning were/are present in the delivery of the current OEP training program.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Because of the sudden increase in application processing errors, associated with the implementation of a new election period named OEP, and believed to be the direct result of an ineffective training program, this study was initiated in an attempt to revisit and review the design of the current OEP training module to understand if and why it has been ineffective.

Reasons why training programs in general can be ineffective range from a variety of factors associated with poor design to many factors associated with poor delivery. In addition there are many different barriers which can inhibit the transfer of knowledge and skills (or the transfer of learning) or the application of new knowledge and skills by trainees to their work tasks (or what is referred to as the transfer of training). Several of these barriers and factors will be discussed through the following review of related literature.

Common Causes of Ineffective Training

There are many factors to consider when it comes to creating and implementing an effective training program, in part because there are multiple working parts that go into training program such as the design, the timing, the learning environments (both physical and mental/emotional), the trainers, the trainees and the instructional materials to name just a few. The effectiveness of training and the transfer of learning rely on a combination of all factors and how they coordinate with each other; and when one or more of these factors are in conflict or are missing it can result barriers to the transfer of learning. These barriers can include but are not limited to ineffective program design, inadequate training environment and/or an ineffective trainer. Since adult learners require the knowledge of why training is relevant to their current work life and how exactly it can be incorporated, the design and the delivery of training programs need to be thoroughly planned and organized (Smith, 2017). Barriers to transfer of

learning can also include trainee's motivation, previous knowledge on the subject, and lack of confidence in the subject (Khan, 2011).

Another common cause of ineffective training is barriers to the transfer of training, which refers to the failure of trainees to apply newly acquired knowledge and skills to their job and work tasks. These barriers to transfer of training and can include poor supervisor support, poor peer support and a negative organizational climate. The organizational culture can play a significant role the success of transfer of training (Velada, Caetano, Michel, Lyons, & Kavanagh, 2007). Employees are likely to apply new skills and knowledge if they feel their company has a supportive organizational culture (Velada et al., 2007). In an attempt to better understand the nature of the problem attributed to the decrease in performance of the Medicare and Retirement department, this review of the literature specifically examined the factors associated with the design of an effective training program and the barriers that can impact the effective transfer of learning and transfer of training.

Basic Design Elements of an Effective Training Program

There are several ways to design a training program, and several different training models that can be followed, but a review of the literature suggests that the design elements of an effective training program can be boiled down to a list of five (Blanchard & Thacker, 2019): a clearly defined purpose and measurable learning objectives; an evaluation plan linked to the learning objectives; relevant instructional content and appropriate learning strategy; a delivery strategy appropriate to the content and the learners; and effective instructional materials.

The key to designing effective training begins, and figuratively ends, with clearly defined and measurable learning objectives that identify the specific work knowledge and skills the trainees are expected to master as a result of the training. All the rest of the design decisions

– what content to include, what learning activities to use, what instructional materials are needed, how to evaluate the learning – are all informed by the learning objectives. Training programs that only define their objectives in general terms (as opposed to specifically stating what a trainee is expected to know and do, what the standard of mastery is, and how mastery will be measured) will be ineffective because the other design elements will become misaligned.

Common Barriers to Transfer of Learning

Barriers of transfer of learning refer to any aspect that can prevent the learner from absorbing the information that is presented to them. This can be due to the way the information was presented, the environment the material was presented, or the learner's preconceptions of the training and many more. As determined by the researcher, the current training program lacks defined objectives, knowledge testing and effective instructional materials. These three barriers were the focus of this section of the literature review.

Lack of defined objectives. Training objectives are measurable behaviors put into words that describe what the trainee will be able to complete following the completion of training (Wickramasinghe, 2006). Well defined training objectives will address the specific goal, when the goal is expected to be completed, and how it is expected to be completed. This gives trainees a framework of the training and helps the trainee's focus on the material with specific goals in mind (Patterson, 2011). Clearly defined objectives that are presented to trainees before the implementation of the training program can increase the effectiveness of the training (Rothkopp & Kaplan, 1973).

When training lacks defined objectives, the ability to measure how effective a training is lost. Effective training is measured by the ability of trainees to apply the knowledge and the skills gained by the specific training in their day to day work environment (Wickramasinghe,

2006). Without these defined measurable objectives, trainees do not have the ability to focus the material into specific goals that are needed to define the training program's effectiveness. This makes the training as a whole, less focused since effective training design constructs objectives first and then focuses the learning activities around said goals (Cabaniss, Arbuckle, & Moga, 2014). When objectives are not used, trainees can become confused about the purpose of the training and how to achieve any goals the training may be insinuating (Cabaniss et al., 2014).

In conclusion, training objectives play a crucial role in focusing trainee's attention and guiding the training activities. When objectives are missing from training, trainees may struggle with focusing the material they are being presented in a way to meet the intended purpose of the training. Trainees can become uncertain about the goals of the training and unsettled by the thought of any knowledge testing referring to the training at hand (Cabaniss et al., 2014). Learning objectives set the stage for the training and guide activities during training to ensure that trainees will be able to complete the measurable objectives given to them (Patterson & Rohde, 2011). Without said objectives, trainees will not have a frame of reference for the training and my lose motivation due to lack of focus.

Lack of knowledge testing. Knowledge testing refers to the retrieval of information taught during a training program. Trainees may believe they know the material from a particular training, but to truly test their knowledge, activities involving retrieval of the material is necessary (Karpicke, 2012). Examples of knowledge testing that involves retrieval of material include group discussions, reciprocal teaching, and tests or quizzes (Karpicke, 2012). These activities promote long-term learning of the presented material.

When training lacks knowledge testing, long-term learning can be hindered. Even though a trainee may be presented with the material multiple times, without being tested, the trainee may

not retain the information long-term. Andrew C. Butler tested the long-term effects of repeated testing against the effects of repeated studying and the results supported the theory that repeated testing provided better transfer of learning than repeated studying (2010). This indicates that even though a trainee may be presented with material multiple times or in multiple ways, testing knowledge of the material will increase the long-term learning more effectively (Butler, 2010).

Knowledge testing is an important step to insuring the long-term retention of training material. When training lacks any sort of knowledge testing, long-term retention can fall short, decreasing the chance of transfer of learning (Butler, 2010). Studying the material alone is not enough to promote long-term learning (Butler, 2010). A study discussed by Jeffery D. Karpicke describes results of students in three different scenarios (2012). One scenario, the students just studied the given material, in another condition the students studied and then practiced retrieval of the material one time, and the last scenario the students studied and then practiced retrieval of the material multiple times (Karpicke, 2012). The findings were that the students in the third scenario were able to recall more of the information from the given study material than the other two scenarios, supporting the theory that testing of knowledge can increase long-term learning (Karpicke, 2012).

The importance of knowledge testing through retrieval practices such as quizzes, group discussion, and reciprocal teaching or demonstration have been shown to increase the long-term learning of material (Karpicke, 2012). Without testing, the material is at risk of not being retained by trainees. This could cause a training to fail even when the material had been presented multiple times (Butler, 2010).

To drive the importance of knowledge testing, a study conducted by Andrew C. Butler and Henry L. Roediger presented study material to students in a classroom setting (2007). The

students in the control group were simply only provided the study material while the students in another group were given a short answer test following the study material (Butler & Roediger, 2007). The students who were given the short answer test had a greater retention of the study material compared to the control group (Butler & Roediger, 2007). The results of this study support the importance of knowledge testing and how retrieval practices improve long-term learning and retention of material.

Ineffective instructional tools. There are many different tools used in training programs to insure the trainees have the best chance at learning the material. Tools can be used in combination of others and also can be chosen depending on the learning modalities. Instruction materials are incredibly important for training programs. Without clear instructional tools, a training program may fail to achieve the training goal at hand.

Marruf A. Oladejo, Gbolagade R. Olosunde, Amos O. Ojebisi and Olawale M. Isola conducted a study regarding instructional materials in a physics coarse and students' academic success, where three groups of physics students were tested on a lecture (2011). One group of students was given improvised instructional materials, meaning relevant to the time and subject (Oladejo et al., 2011). The second group was given standard instructional materials; meaning not specialized or updated in the physics field of study and the third was a control group (Oladejo et al., 2011). The results of the study found that the students who were given the improvised instructional materials scored the highest on the test given after the lecture (Oladejo et al., 2011). When the proper instructional materials are provided, a trainee will have a higher success rate compared to materials that fall short of relevance or that do not follow objectives (Oladejo et al., 2011). Without any or with insufficient instructional materials, no matter how

much knowledge the trainer has on a topic, it will be difficult for the trainer to translate his or her knowledge to the trainees (Oladejo et al., 2011).

Even when some instructional materials are available, if the materials are not relevant to the class objectives or are out dated, the materials fail to be helpful tools (Oladejo et al., 2011). A study conducted by Sutuma Edessa explored the impacts of insufficient instructional materials for teaching biology (2017). Data was gathered through observation and interviews of trainees that were in a post graduate training program for biology teachers (Edessa, 2017). These trainees all had insufficient instructional materials compared to other similar programs in regions that had the sufficient tools and materials (Edessa, 2017). The results of the study concluded that the insufficient instructional tools negatively affected the skills of the trainees to preform biological tasks (Edessa, 2017). Unfortunately, even when instructional materials are available, but lack in relativity to the subject or are out dated, the materials can negatively affect a trainee's success in the training program (Edessa, 2017).

Common Barriers to Transfer of Training

Barriers to transfer of training refer to any aspect that can prevent the implementation of learned training process to daily work life. Many factors can affect the transfer of training such as near and far transfer, which refer to the similarities of the learning environment to the real world scenarios. Other barriers can also include lack of supervisor support, lack of peer support and lack of organizational support these of which will be expanded on.

Lack of supervisor support. Lack of supervisor support can mean many things; whether the supervisor does not agree with the training to if the supervisor does not understand the material of the training. Supervisor's themselves may lack the knowledge of the training

material or the objectives of the training and therefore cannot support employees who have received the training.

Supervisor support on the transfer of training can have a positive correlation to the success of employee's transfer of training, as supported by a study conducted by D.J.J.M. Nijman, W.J. Nijhof, A.A.M. Wognum, and B.P. Veldkamp found (2006). Data was gathered through post-training questionnaires given to trainees regarding supervisor support during and after the training (Nijiman et al., 2006). The study found that supervisor support not only has a positive correlation with employee motivation but also has a positive correlation with trainee's transfer outcomes (Nijiman et al., 2006). When supervisor support is lacking or non-existent, this could then pose a barrier of transferring of training (Nijiman et al., 2006).

Many studies have shown the same positive correlation between supervisor support and the transfer of training. Natalie Govaerts, Eva Kyndt, Soraya Vreye and Filip Dochy went one step further in their study regarding the supervisor's perception on their role in employee's transfer of training (2017). Supervisors from many different organizations were interviewed in regards to their perceived impact of employee's transfer of learning (Govaerts et al., 2017). One of the many findings was that supervisors, who participated in the training and were involved in the during-training period, perceived that their employees had strong transfer of training due to the supervisor's efforts and support (Govaerts et al., 2017). These finding support the theory that supervisor support during the training program and their involvement in the training can lead to positive effects on employee transfer of training (Govaerts et al., 2017). The lack of supervisor support and involvement training could then potentially hinder employee's transfer of training.

Lack of peer support. Peer support can be a powerful influencer on the transfer of training, as many studies have concluded. When a trainee and fellow peers are unsure of the

objectives of a training program or unsure of why the training is needed, this could cause negative emotions and low motivation among trainees (Martin, 2010).

Harry J. Martin conducted a study regarding correlation between workplace climate and peer support and training transfer (2010). The study took place in at a company in the Midwest in which conducted a managerial training program (Martin, 2010). Interviews were conducted with trainees of the program regarding workplace climate, peer support and training transfer (Martin, 2010). The study found that those with reportedly greater peer support showed an increase in transfer than those who reported to have less peer support (Martin, 2010). Although peer support is subjective on what it specifically entails, it is evident from the study that peer support can have a positive correlation with transfer of training (Martin, 2010). Without this peer support, even in a positive work climate, less progress in transfer is evident (Martin, 2010).

Peer support can be even more influencing than supervisor support in the transfer of training according to Ragini Chauhan, Piyali Ghosh, Alka Rai and Divya Shukla who conducted a study on the impact of support it the workplace and its impact on transfer of training (2016). The study took place in an Indian manufacturing company and data was collected through self-reported questionnaires from employees who have recently completed a training program (Chauhan et al., 2016). The questionnaires addressed four topics, supervisor support, peer support, motivation to transfer and transfer of training (Chauhan et al., 2016). The results of the study concluded that peer support had greater effect on both motivation to transfer and transfer of training over supervisor support, which showed little significance in the findings (Chauhan et al., 2016). When peer support is lacking, this could be an indicator to poor transfer of training, even more so than if supervisor support is lacking within a department (Chauhan et al., 2016).

Lack of organizational support. An organization's culture can be incredibly influential on many aspects of employees' work lives such as morale, growth, and retention. If a culture fails to create a supportive environment, employees' may find themselves struggling through their day to day responsibilities as supported by Aindrila Chatterjee, Arun Pereira and Reid Bates who conducted a study on how organizational culture can affect the learning transfer environment (2018). Data was collected by surveying participants of an executive training program on their thoughts on their organization (Chatterjee et al., 2018). The results of the study concluded that employees who believe their company culture to be flexible and supportive had a higher transfer of training over those employees who believe their culture to be controlling and hierarchy focused whom of which reported less transfer of training (Chatterjee et al., 2018). When an organization is open and supportive to change and development, the culture can influence employees to apply new skills without fear of backlash (Chatterjee et al., 2018). Without this support for the organization, transfer of training can be negatively affected (Chatterjee et al., 2018).

To explain the importance of a supportive organization even further, a study conducted by Maria Simosi found supportive cultures to be conducive to transfer of training (2012). The study gathered data through surveys, given to newly hired employees in Greece after completing four-week new hire training (Simosi, 2012). The surveys consisted of questions that pertained to training transfer, self-efficacy and culture orientation (Simosi, 2012). The results of the study concluded that organizational culture that supports goal achievement and team work, encourage the new hires to apply their newly trained skills in their new roles at the company (Simosi, 2012). Companies with supportive culture not only appear to have an impact of current employees transfer of training but also on new hire transfer of training (Simosi, 2012). Without

this supportive culture companies could fail to grow as a company and could also decrease retention in newly hired employees (Simosi, 2012).

Chapter III: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to answer the question:

What barriers may have, or currently, exist in the design and delivery of Company XYZ's OEP training program that was or possibly still is preventing it from effectively developing the knowledge and skills required by members of the Medicare and Retirement department to minimize OEP processing errors?

Following the review of literature related to the effective design and delivery of training programs it was determined that this study only needed to revisit and review the design of the current OEP training module and identify possible barriers to the transfer of learning. The researcher determined it was not necessary to identify possible barriers to the transfer of training due to the support of peers, supervisor and organization being evident. The limitations section describes the reasoning behind this decision in a more detailed manner.

Subject Selection and Description

The Medicare and Retirement department has 25 applications processors, 23 of whom, as a group, received initial training of the new OEP requirements before the new process was implemented, and 2 who were hired after the new process had been put in place and received OEP training as part of their new employee orientation. Because this study was focused on the design of the OEP training module no data was gathered directly from the employees and no individual performance data was provided as part of the monthly and yearly error reporting.

Instrumentation

No instruments were created for this study for the purpose of collecting data.

Data Collection Procedures

This study used three separate processes for the collection of information related to the design of the OEP training module and potential barriers to the transfer of learning. The first process was a problems/needs assessment. This process was used to confirm that the problem the Medicare and Retirement department was facing, with regards to OEP, was correctable with training, meaning the root cause of the problem was a lack of job knowledge. The problem/needs assessment utilized the company's monthly and yearly reporting data to review changes in errors from before OEP was introduced to three months after it was set into production. Due to privacy restraints, individual error reports could not be used and thus the error reports reflected the group as a whole.

The second process was a task analysis. The purpose of this analysis was to verify that the instructional content of the OEP training module accurately reflected the steps and KSA's needed to correctly use the OEP election period. The task analysis was completed by working an enrollee's application with OEP election period and notating the detailed steps needed to verify the specific requirements for this election period.

The third and final information collection process used in this study was a gap analysis. Based on the findings of the task analysis and the required elements of an effective training program as identified from the review of the literature, a comparison of both the design of the current OEP training module and instructional content was made to what the OEP training module should include.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the collected information acquired from each of the three processes just described consisted on simple comparison of current state to desired state, or stated in other

terms, what is to what should be. The comparative standards used for the problem/needs assessment were historical department performance records; for the task analysis the review of the revised and updated OEP requirements; and for the gap analysis the findings from both the task analysis and the literature review.

Chapter IV: Results

In January of 2019 Company XYZ has added a new election period named OEP, and in the months following the introduction of this new procedure the performance of the Medicare and Retirement department significantly decreased suggesting that the requirements for using this election period had not been made clear to the 25 application processors in the training that had been provided to the Medicare and Retirement department.

The purpose of this study was therefore intended to answer the question:

What barriers may have, or currently, exist in the design and delivery of Company XYZ's OEP training program that was or possibly still is preventing it from effectively developing the knowledge and skills required by members of the Medicare and Retirement department to minimize OEP processing errors?

To answer this question three analyses were conducted: a problem/needs assessment to confirm the cause of the problem was associated with a lack of job knowledge and not any other factors; a task analysis of the OEP process to verify needed elements/instructional content of the training and lastly, a gap analysis comparing the current OEP training and the ideal OEP training.

Problem/Needs Assessment Results

The Medicare and Retirement department applications team consists of 25 applications processors. These processors strive for 100% quality each month and have their work recorded and reported on a monthly base. These reports show the amount of applications completed and how many errors had been made. The reports record multiple different types of errors ranging from keying errors to errors in processor documentation and errors regarding member enrollment. Only the errors regarding member enrollment, and specifically errors pertaining to

eligibility requirements, were of importance to this study as these errors specifically address the problem at hand regarding OEP.

Two reports were analyzed to clearly establish the problem of declining department performance was related to OEP processing. Table 1 represents the Medicare and Retirement department applications team's errors recorded through 2018. Note that these errors are specifically regarding member enrollment pertaining to eligibility requirements. As previously mentioned, due to privacy constraints the reports could not be broken down by specific processor, thus the team as a whole achieved 97.9% quality throughout 2018.

Table 1

Medicare and Retirement Department Applications Team Annual Quality Report for 2018

	Number of Total Applications	Number of Total Errors Recorded	Quality Percentage for 2018
Applications Team	298,514	5,970	97.9%

In January of 2019 the new OEP process had been added to the department's application processors' work flow, and as shown in table 2, the quality number between the annual reporting for 2018 and the first quarter of 2019 had significantly decreased.

Table 2

Medicare and Retirement Department Applications Team Quarter 1 Quality Report for 2019

	Number of Total Applications Worked	Number of Total Errors Recorded	Quality Percentage
Applications Team	74,854	6,737	90.9%

The amount of errors regarding member enrollment pertaining to eligibility requirements were higher within the first quarter of 2019 than they had been annually for 2018 and this could

only be attributed to the addition of OEP to the workflow. As the variation in performance only was evident in errors associated with eligibility requirements it can be reasonably assumed that the performance change was due to lack of understanding the eligibility requirements for this specific election period; and because all application processors had received training on the new OEP process it could also be reasonably assumed that the training had been ineffective, although what aspect of the training – design or delivery – had been effective could not be determined from this data. However, because training had been delivered in several different ways (classroom to 20 individuals, webinar to 3 individuals, and as part of new employee orientation to 2 individuals) it was decided that the issue was most likely in the design of the training.

Task Analysis Results

To assess the design of the training a task analysis of the OEP process was conducted to verify that the instructional content of the OEP training module was a true representation of the task and the KSA's required to complete the task. This step was considered necessary because at least four changes to the OEP process had been made since the new process had been implemented. The OEP is a systems type task requiring the applications processor to make a series of defined choices in establishing the enrollee's eligibility. Figure 3 illustrates findings of the task analysis: the step by step process of decisions verifying the eligibility requirements for the OEP election type. If the enrollee does not satisfy any of the required elements, the enrollee would not qualify for the OEP election period. Processing errors can result if the application processor does not understand, and thus does not correctly follow the process by forgetting steps, completing steps out of sequence, or not fully understanding any individual step/decision.

Three differences were found between the task analysis and what had been presented in the original training. The first was the addition of utilizing the MARx program to determine

eligibility. The second difference was what to look for in the MARx system, whether a plan was active or inactive. Lastly, the final difference found was if there was an active plan in MARx, checking to see what the plan type was.

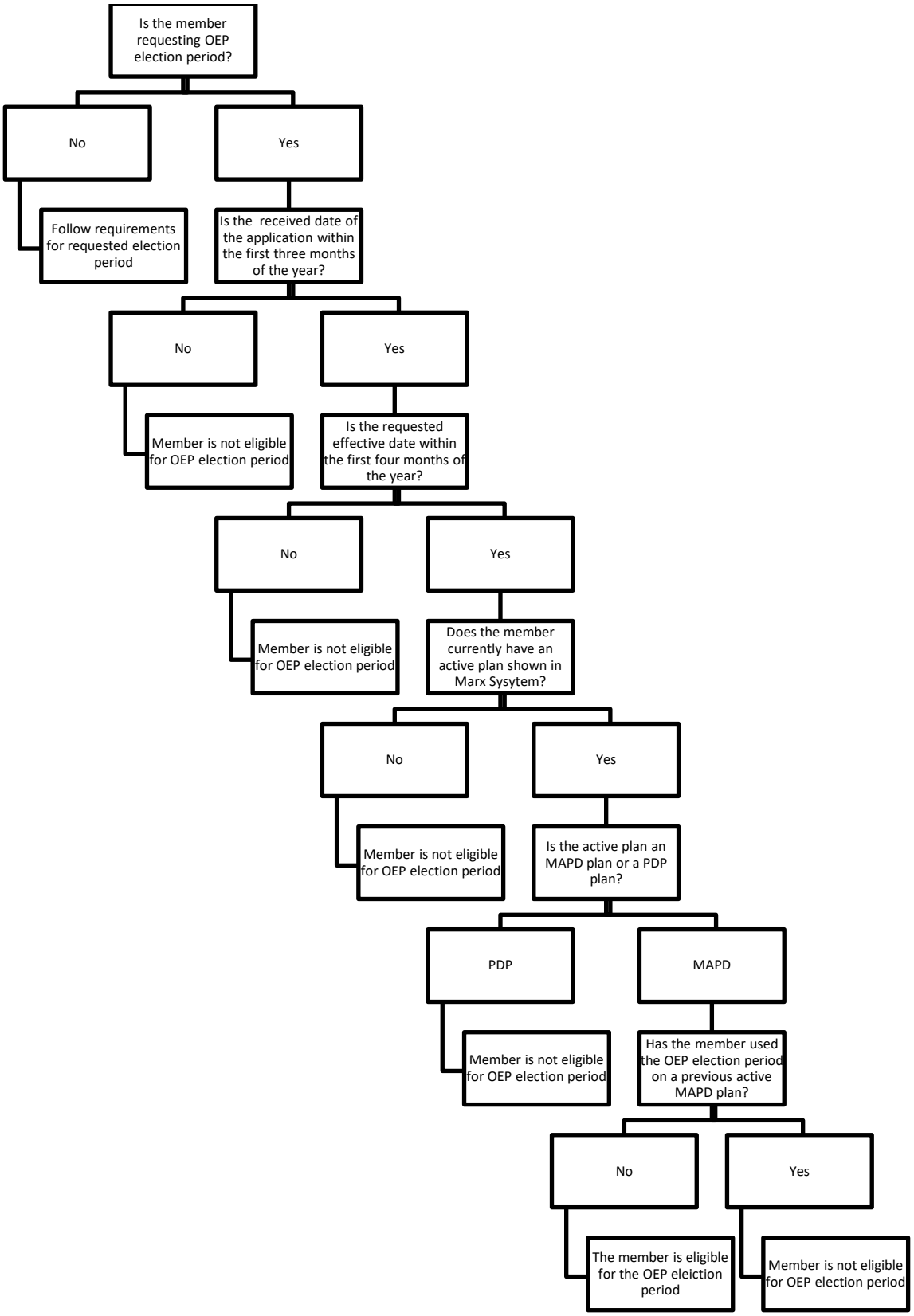

Figure 1. Task analysis of OEP election period.

Gap Analysis Results

The final information gathering process used in this study was a gap analysis of the design of the OEP training module to determine if it conformed to the espoused industry requirements of effective training design. To inform this analysis the study focused on the three factors or barriers identified in the literature review that had the greatest impact on the transfer of learning: the lack of clearly defined and measurable learning objectives, the lack of knowledge testing, and the appropriateness and quality of the instructional tools.

The element of learning objectives. In regards to the importance of clearly defined and measurable learning objectives, the gap analysis identified that the current OEP training module does not include any objectives for trainees to focus their attention on or to measure their understanding with. An effective training design includes defined learning objectives to measure the success of the training program as a whole and as a measure of the trainee's mastery of the instructional content. The learning objectives also inform the structure of the training, including the training materials, learning activities and knowledge testing. Since learning objectives are missing from the current training, this is a large barrier for transfer of learning.

The task analysis, by identifying the required KSA's, provided the basis for three objectives that would be suitable for the OEP training.

The element of knowledge testing. The next barrier to the transfer of learning the gap analysis clearly identified was a lack of knowledge testing. Knowledge testing is a tool used to promote long-term learning of the presented material and can include group discussions, reciprocal teaching, and tests or quizzes (Karpicke, 2012). The current OEP training module lacks any sort of knowledge testing.

To meet the objectives identified through the task analysis testing for the OEP training needs to include a knowledge test at the end of the training and a demonstration test.

The element of appropriate and quality instructional tools. Lastly, the results of the gap analysis concluded that the instructional tools used in conjunction with the current OEP training module were ineffective. Training tools need to pertain to the learning objectives to give the best chance of transfer of learning. Since the current OEP training lacked any such objectives, the training materials had no basis to start from. The current instructional tools consist of a simple set of Power Point slides explaining what the OEP election period is. Due to the many announcements regarding the OEP requirements, the tools lacked current and relevant information regarding OEP.

To conclude, the gap analysis clearly identified three barriers to the transfer of learning - lack of defined and measurable learning objectives, lack of knowledge testing and lack of effective training materials - these barriers are believed to have significantly contributed to the OEP training's poor success and the increase of errors made by the applications processors on the Medicare and Retirement Department Applications Team.

Chapter V: Discussion, Limitations, Conclusion and Recommendation

Company XYZ has added a new election period named OEP, and the requirements for using this election period have not been made clear to the 25 application processors in the Medicare and Retirement department. Errors are being made when utilizing OEP, causing delays in member enrollment. The training program needed to be thoroughly analyzed to understand why it has been ineffective. A problem/needs assessment, task analysis and a gap analysis were conducted on the current OEP training.

Discussion and Recommendations

After completing the problem/needs assessment, task analysis and a gap analysis on the current OEP training it was established that the OEP training was ineffective and was the cause of the decrease in the Medicare and Retirement department's performance; that the instructional content no longer matched the actual OEP process being used, and that there were three barriers to the transfer of learning: the lack of clearly defined and measurable learning objectives, the lack of knowledge testing and the lack of appropriate and effective instructional tools.

The current OEP training did not include any objectives at all, which created a barrier to learning due to the trainee's not having a measurable goal to attain. The lack of objectives also caused a lack in direction for the training itself. Many aspects of a training program rely on the objectives to guide the tools, testing and materials used. With no defined objectives, the current training lacked direction and structure, potentially creating the barrier to the transfer of learning that occurred. The task analysis conducted as part of this study identified three KSA's that should be used to form the basis the required learning objectives. It is recommended that upon completion of OEP training application processors need to be able to determine the correct eligibility time frame for the OEP election period, correctly determine the enrollee's current

enrollment status, and verify if the enrollee had used the OEP election period on previous applications.

The lack of knowledge testing was the second barrier that was identified. Knowledge testing increases the yield of long-term learning of material. It gives the trainee's the opportunity to utilize the skills they learned in training and ensure that they are grasping the taught concepts and procedures before putting them into production in daily work assignments. To establish mastery of the KSA's identified through the task analysis testing for the OEP training needs to include a knowledge test and a demonstration test.

Lastly, the instructional tools used in the current OEP training were out dated and one dimensional. This created another barrier to the transfer of learning. Many updates were made to the OEP requirements since the initial OEP training but none of the updates were made in the training materials. This is problematic since the training tools, in this case a PowerPoint slides, was also used to train new hires. The current instructional tools also lacked in any sort of interaction for the trainees as they are simply words on a slide without any questions or example scenarios for the trainees to practice with. Utilizing instructional tools that support multiple learning modalities besides just visual learning could have increased the probability of the transfer of learning.

Limitations

A major limitation to the current study was the lack of individual reporting available regarding errors made by the application processors, as well as the inability to collect data from each of the application processors regarding their perceptions of the training. Due to privacy restraints, the study could only utilize the Medicare and Retirement department applications team's errors as a whole and not on an individual base. Because of this, the study was unable to

investigate the specific errors regarding eligibility requirements and if the errors were made solely with the OEP election period.

Due to the specificity of the transfer of learning barriers found, there may have been other outside factors to explore that may have also contributed to the failure of the training such as the motivation of each individual employee and the background knowledge they may have had or lacked in.

Conclusion

The study has found that the current design of the OEP training created barriers to the transfer of learning by not including defined objectives, knowledge testing and effective instructional tools. To prevent barriers of the transfer of learning, a training program needs to be thoroughly analyzed and designed. When a training program is lacking in any specific aspects such as defined objectives, this could derail the whole success of the training. In this case, it can be assumed the three barriers that were found to exist largely contributed to the failure of the current OEP training.

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