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The Effect of Training and Development on Employee Attitude as it Relates to Training and Work Proficiency

Debra L. Truitt[1]

Abstract

It is incumbent on training and development professionals to design, implement, and evaluate the effectiveness of their programs in reducing disputes in workplace performance. This study explores the relationships between training experiences and attitudes and attitudes about perceived job proficiency. In a sample of 237 full-time salaried/exempt and hourly/nonexempt employees from one academic institution and three businesses in the states of Maryland, Delaware, and Arizona, the author finds a direct relationship between one's positive training experiences and attitudes and one's proficiency. In this study, 86.8% of those who had updated training had the most positive attitudes toward training ($\gamma = .293$, $p < .05$). Furthermore, 80% of those who had negative training attitudes also had negative views on their proficiency ($\gamma = .465$, $p < .000$).

Keywords

development, training, attitudes, job proficiency

Any institution of higher learning or business whose goals are to survive and prosper in this present day diverse and regressed economy has found it imperative to invest in ongoing training and development to improve proficiencies in production as well as to acquire the greatest return in investment of human capital (Knoke & Kalleberg, 1994). Although this area of training effectiveness seems paramount, and although training is an integral part of the employer–employee relationship, Knoke and Kalleberg (1994) suggest direct evidence about company training practices based on representative samples of diverse employing organizations is almost non-existent. Furthermore, several authors have suggested that training is most extensive only in establishments which operate in complex market environments (Rowden & Conine, 2005; Sahinidis & Bouris, 2008). In addition, Rowden and Conine (2005) indicate that there is limited research on human resource development in small and midsized businesses. According to these authors, most people believe that small businesses do little, if any, development of their workers. Moreover, Rowden and Conine cite *Training Magazine,* which annually conducts research on the training industry in the United States, as not even attempting to contact businesses with fewer than 100 employees. In addition, in their annual research sample, only 16% consisted of companies between 100 and 500 workers. In general, little human resource development occurs in small businesses (Hill & Stewart, 1999). In summary, a slowly growing number of authors are currently doing more research in the areas of training and development and its effects on employees that we have not seen in past literature.

Months of research failed to locate objective evidence in support of connecting training and attitude, its impact on job proficiencies, and the employee's perception that lack of meaningful training directly affects proficiencies and attitude. The objective of this study is to gather and provide empirical data for training relationships that are not currently available.

Cheng and Ho (2001) also discuss the importance of training and its impact on job performance:

> While employee performance is one of the crucial measures emphasized by the top management, employees are more concerned about their own productivity and are increasingly aware of the accelerated obsolescence of knowledge and skills in their turbulent environment. As the literature suggests, by effectively training and developing employees, they will become more aligned for career growth—career potential enhances personal motivation. (p. 22)

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To illustrate Cheng and Ho's (2001) position, Constantino and Merchant (1996) comment that "both training and education are necessary components for a successful conflict management system " (p. 22). One might clearly imagine how failure to provide training and education by the organization could result in conflict between employer and employee. Such conflict could potentially lead to any number of complicated scenarios, including but not limited to formal complaints by the employee which eventually become actual law suits against the organization, all of which could cost the industry time, energy, and money. When universities or businesses withhold opportunities for training and development, they also fail to demonstrate an understanding of how to identify organizational conflict. According to these same authors, all organizations should have a conflict management system in place (Constantino & Merchant, 1996). When conflict is manifested in the organization by clusters of employees who are dissatisfied, this group dissatisfaction state of mind can result in frenzied chaos, dissatisfaction, grievances, and turmoil in the organization. Again, having a conflict management system in place would potentially be able to short circuit such a disruptive process. Clearly, it is extremely important that employees benefit from ongoing employer provided training. "One of the most frequently encountered human capital development interventions is training" (Campbell & Kuncel, 2001, p. 278). To enhance job performance, training skills and behaviors have to be transferred to the workplace, maintained over time, and generalized across contexts (Holton & Baldwin, 2000). Consequently, specific job training is a complicated matter and has been the focus of much of the training literature (Chiaburu & Teklab, 2005). More specifically, in addition to the exact nature of job training, training is seen as relevant to fostering a positive relationship between learning satisfaction and the effectiveness of applied learning (Liu, 2002; Wang, 2001). As an aside, even though authors have suggested that training programs are vital to organizations (Knoke & Kalleberg, 1994; Liu, 2002; Wang, 2001), training programs are often the first to go (Young, 2008). This trend to cut training programs during poor economic times seems short-sighted, if in fact, training does affect job proficiency and relieves workplace conflict. The definition of results and empirical data included in this study demonstrates that employee do, in fact, perceive that training directly effects job proficiency is an indicator which many employers interested in sound business management and growth in the marketplace should subscribe to initiating and maintaining offerings of soft skill (leadership, effective communications, and coaching) and technical proficiency training.

Moreover, several authors have also written about the importance of staff development. Both formal and informal training opportunities are thought to provide a forum for the development of talent. When talent is fostered and nurtured, competitive advantages in performance are untainted (Becker & Gerhard, 1996; Bowling, 2007; Davenport, 2006; Peters & Waterman, 1982). Furthermore, the organizational

commitment or "the relative strength of an individual's identification and involvement in a particular organization" (Pool & Pool, 2007, p. 353) depends on effective training and development programs. According to these authors, organizations demonstrating keen insight make provisions for satisfying the training needs of their current workforce. Cheng and Ho (2001) indicate that adequate training produces marked improvements in employee communication and proficiency of performances as well as extending retention time. Moreover, when programs target communication skills with coworkers, there are significant increases in profit as well as a greater number of reported positive working relationships that are formed. Employees with good communication skills gather more information concerning procedures and technologies related to job performances, thus assuming greater accountability and subsequent responsibility, both of which effect improve proficiency (Adams, 1989; Gordon, 1977). Also, training and education have been shown to have a significant positive effect on job involvement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Karia & Asaari, 2006).

Similarly, Ahmad and Karia (n.d.) have emphasized the relationship between training and attitude as it relates to working with others. Employees with positive attitudes become stakeholders in the process and job accomplishment is of a higher priority. Furthermore, successful organizations achieve a partnership between workers and management. The partnership includes participation in teamwork activities and continuous learning application. The reported findings further suggest that an employee's participation in decision making and problem solving develops organizational trust (Anschutz, 1995).

Corporations and businesses need to grow and innovate continuously, pursue sustained development, and cope with rapid changes in their external environments as well as increasingly competitive international markets. Hence, organizations need to strengthen or expand the knowledge base, skills, and abilities of their employees. For this purpose, education and training must be incorporated into a systematic and formal system if the goals of employees and corporation are to be attained (Liu, 2002; McGehee & Thayer, 1961).

Training, as defined in the present study "is the planned intervention that is designed to enhance the determinants of individual job performance" (Chiaburu &Teklab, 2005). Training is related to the skills an employee must acquire to improve the probability of achieving the organization's overall business and academic goals and objectives. Positive training offered to employees may assist with reduction of anxiety or frustration, which most employees have experienced on more than one occasion during their employment careers (Cheng & Ho, 2001).

According to Tsai, Yen, Huang, and Huang (2007), employees who are committed to learning showed a higher level of job satisfaction that has a positive effect on their performance. Moreover, Locke defined job satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from a

positive appraisal of the job or job experiences (Locke, 1976). The literature suggests that commitment results from adequate training and development for successful job completion and an increase in job performance (Tsai et al., 2007).

In addition, the larger the gap between the skills required to perform a task and the actual skills available for performing a task, the greater the lack of job satisfaction and the greater the increase in employee turnover within the organization. Conversely then, not having the skills to perform a job correctly can set up employees for failure and put the business at a less-than-competitive disadvantage. The resulting high turnover would predict the need for even more training that would then have a direct impact on the bottom line of any business.

Moreover, poor performance reviews due to inadequate job training can produce employee dissatisfaction and conflict. Although there is no direct link in the literature between training and job satisfaction, Rowden and Shamsuddin (2000) and Rowden and Conine (2005) argue that the most thoroughly trained employees will better satisfy the needs of their customers and employees.

In summary, although the literature strongly suggests a direct relationship between job training and job performance as well as job training and employee attitudes, there is little empirical support for this suggestion. Clearly, there is a need to provide such empirical support. The purpose of the present study was to explore the relationship between training and development and its perceived impact on employee attitudes and perceived job performance proficiencies. The empirical data suggest a perceived gap by the employees between training attitudes and job proficiencies. This gap could then result in conflict between the employee and employer relationship. The present study elaborates and extends previous research by exploring participant attitudes in an academic institution as well as in three businesses, one of which is a small-to-moderate size business that is usually overlooked in other research studies. The hypotheses in this study specifically address the relationship between employees with training experiences who have positive attitudes about training (training attitudes), and those positive training attitudes are perceived to improve job proficiency.

Method

Procedures

Using convenience sampling, four organizations were recruited through personal contacts with business professionals, including one university and three for-profit businesses. Participation by the academic institution was approved by the Director of Human Resources. The approving and granting authority for the companies was respectively the Director of Operations, Executive Advisory Board Committee, and President.

The strategy behind the choice of this particular target population was to determine cultural variations between academic and for-profit businesses by assessing attitudinal differences in relation to training and development and by comparing the result of these assessments. The exempt/salary and nonexempt/hourly staff at the academic institution was selected based on past history of training and development if the Human Resources Department had offered training opportunities. The university's Human Resource Department provided the primary investigator a list of all exempt/salary and nonexempt/hourly employees. A survey developed by the primary investigator, along with other supporting documents, was sent to each employee on the list.

Each company that was contacted also reported ongoing training initiatives and offerings similar to those offered by the academic institution in the past. The participants representing the three companies were determined by their availability and willingness to volunteer to participate in the survey. In accordance with the guidelines of the Human Subjects Committee, participant anonymity was maintained.

Participants were provided a packet containing a participant instruction sheet, a risks/benefits analysis sheet, a disclosure form, a consent form, a survey form, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope addressed to the primary investigator.

Once data were returned to the primary investigator, all consent forms were separated from the original survey, placed in a designated folder, and locked in a file cabinet housed in the primary investigator's locked office. All returned surveys were coded and the results entered into a statistical system package (PASW). All data had been run and completed, and the results of the surveys are made available on request.

The initial sample for this study totaled 487 full-time exempt/salaried and nonexempt/hourly employees. The total number of surveys returned was 237, yielding a response rate of 48.6%. Each participating business had ongoing training initiatives and offerings similar to those of the academic institution. All participants for this study were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate. No compensation was given in exchange for participation. This study was approved by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB; see Appendix A)

The sampled organizations include a university in Maryland with 380 exempt and nonexempt employees, an Arizona Corporation's subdivision of 50 employees, a Delaware company's department with 34 employees, and a Maryland Corporation with 60 employees. Random sampling techniques were employed to arrive at a representative sample of each division of interest.

Survey Development and Testing

The survey for this study was created by the author as part of a graduate course requirement. The survey was composed of 20 items, 16 of which were rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1= *fully disagree* to 4 = *fully agree*. Three

Table 1. Items and Reliability of Survey Instruments Items a .b.

1.	Job training
2.	Include in development training
3.	Training at all levels
4.	Important for job growth
5.	Important for advancement
6.	Updated training
7.	Training not adequate
8.	Effective coaching
9.	Coaching is meaningful
10.	Feel valued at job
11.	Feel part of team
12.	Supervisor solicits input
13.	having a mentor
14.	Meeting with mentor

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Statistic = .915
Guttman Split-Half Reliability Statistic = .815 .
[a]Note: two survey items were omitted as they were demographic items.
[b]Note: all items were measured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from
1 = Fully Disagree to 4 = Fully Agree

remaining items were demographic information (gender, age, and job status). The final item was an open-ended question that asked participates about preferred training protocols. This final item was analyzed separately and did not directly address the hypotheses.

Two different reliability measures were generated to test the survey instrument used for this research. A Cronbach's alpha test of reliability was used to establish the internal reliability of the scaled variables as a whole. The Cronbach's alpha score derived was .915 (see Table 1), surpassing the minimum of .70 recommended by Nunnally (1978).

A second reliability measure called the Guttman Split-Half Reliability Coefficient Statistic was computed to assure reliability of the scale items. The test is designed to compare the items in the first half of the scale with the items in the second half of the scale. The obtained Guttman value was .815, suggesting strong reliability of the instrument (see Table 1).

Instrument validity tests were conducted using experts and hypotheses testing. A psychologist, human resources representative, business vice president, and business employee reviewed the survey to establish face validity. All four agreed that the questions on the survey appeared to measure what they were intended to measure. Construct validity using hypothesis testing assesses the correspondence between the concept itself and the empirical indicators of the concept. Concurrent validity also uses hypothesis testing to show differences between groups about whom we know differences exist. Each of the hypotheses below was tested using chi-square and gamma statistical procedures.
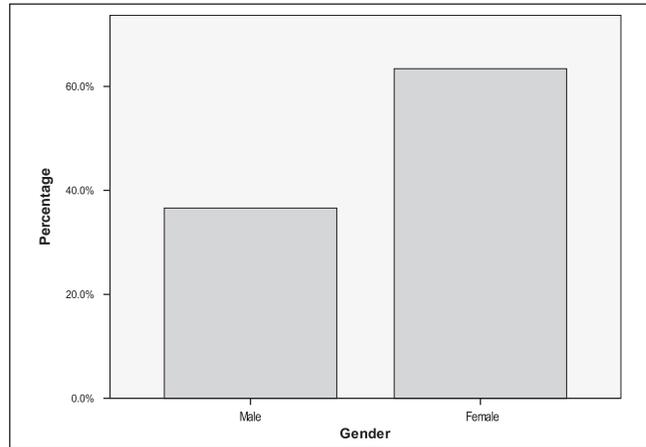
Figure 1. Gender of participants

Table 2. Age Distribution

	Frequency	%
Valid		
19-49 years	131	55.7
50+ years	104	44.3
Total	235	100.0
Missing		
99	2	
Total	237	

Table 3. Demographic of Participants Exempt/Salaried and Nonexempt/Hourly

	Frequency	Valid %
Valid		
Exempt/salaried	124	52.8
Nonexempt/hourly	111	47.2
Total	235	100.0
Missing	2	
Total	237	

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Those employees with training experiences have positive attitudes about training (training attitudes).

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Positive training attitudes are perceived to improve job proficiency.

Data Overview

Sample demographics. The sample for this study was composed of 63.4% women and 36.6% men (see Figure 1). In this sample, 55.7% of the participants ranged in age from 19 to 49, and 44.3% were above the age of 50 (see Table 2).
The sample for this study was composed of 124 (52.8%) exempt/salaried employees and 111 (47.2%) nonexempt/hourly employees (see Table 3). Figure 2 reveals the distri-
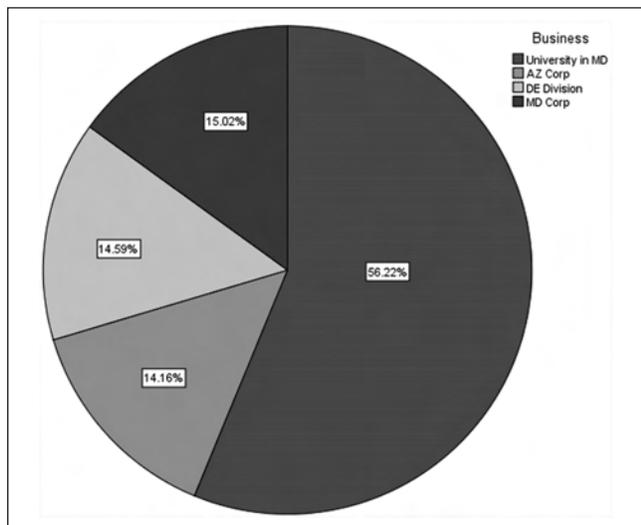
Figure 2. Business distribution

bution between the four groups that participated in this study. The largest participating group in this study was composed of the university in Maryland with a 56.22% response rate. The second participating group in this study was the Maryland Corporation with a response rate of 15.02%. The third participating group of this study was the Delaware Division with a response rate of 14.59%, and the last participating group of this study was the Arizona Corporation with a 14.59% response rate (see Figure 2).

Independent Variables

To best discover demographic factors that may affect one's training attitudes and perceptions on job proficiency, it is necessary to look at whether or not gender, work status, and type of business are related to the dependent variables.

In addition, several single survey items were identified as potentially affecting one's views on perceived job proficiency. These are the following: Updated Training—Item 6 on survey instrument, Effective Coaching—Item 8, Meaningful Coaching—Item 9, Solicits Input—Item 12. Training Attitudes is a scale created using Questions 1 to 5 on the survey instrument (see items listed below).

Question 1: Effective Tools—On-the-job training is an effective tool for learning new skills.
Question 2: Communications—Developmental training should include effective communications, team building, and coaching.
Question 3: Levels—Development training should be afforded to all levels and/or positions.
Question 4: Growth and Advancement—Training and development is important for job growth.
Question 5: Advancement—Training and development is important for potential advancement.

Table 4. Updated Training by Training Attitudes

	Training attitudes			
	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree	Total
Updated training				
Fully disagree				
Count	3	1	9	13
% within updated training	23.1	7.7	69.2	100.0
Disagree				
Count	1	10	21	32
% within updated training	3.1	31.3	65.6*	100.0
Agree				
Count	1	25	53	79
% within updated training	1.3	31.6	67.1	100.0
Fully agree				
Count	0	5	33	38
% within updated training	.0	13.2	86.8*	100.0
Total				
Count	5	41	116	162
% within updated training	3.1	25.3	71.6	100.0

Note: γ = .293.
*p < .05.

Dependent Variables

The following two variables, training attitudes and proficiency, that are described above were identified in the hypotheses as the dependent variables in this study. Proficiency is also a scale using Items 6, 8, 9, and 12 from the survey.

Question 6: Updated Training—I receive updated training which is required for my position.
Question 8: Adequate Training—My supervisor conducts effective coaching sessions with me.
Question 9: Meaningful Coaching—My coaching sessions are meaningful and motivational.
Question 12: Solicits Input—My supervisor solicits my input on issues and opportunities.

In terms of construct validity, the results of Tables 4 and 5 suggest that the concepts (training attitudes and perceived job proficiency) do in fact measure what they are intended to measure.

Table 4 on updated training by training attitudes has a moderately strong gamma score of .293 that is statistically significant at p < .05 (H1).

Table 5. Training Attitudes/Proficiency Cross-Tabulation

	Proficiency			
	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree	Total
Training attitudes				
Disagree				
Count	4	0	1	5
% within training attitudes	80.0*	0	20.0	100.0
Agree				
Count	13	30	10	53
% within training attitudes	24.5	56.6	18.9	100.0
Fully agree				
Count	17	51	54	122
% within training attitudes	13.9*	41.8	44.3	100.0
Total				
Count	34	81	65	180
% within training attitudes	18.9	45.0	36.1	100.0

Note: γ = .465.
*p < .000.

Table 6. Gender by Training Attitudes

	Training attitudes			
	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree	Total
Gender				
Male				
Count	2	32	51	85
% within gender	2.4	37.6	60.0*	100.0
Female				
Count	6	31	103	140
% within gender	4.3	22.1	73.6*	100.0
Total				
Count	8	63	154	225
% within gender	3.6	28.0	68.4	100.0

Note: χ^2 = 6.519, df = 2.
*p < .05.

Table 7. Work Status by Proficiency

	Proficiency			
	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree	Total
Work status				
Exempt/salaried				
Count	12	50	35	97
% within staff status	12.4*	51.5	36.1	100.0
Nonexempt/hourly				
Count	23	34	33	90
% within staff status	25.6*	37.8	36.7	100.0
Total				
Count	35	84	68	187
% within staff status	18.7	44.9	36.4	100.0

Note: χ^2 = 6.310, df = 2.
*p < .05.

Table 8. Business by Proficiency

	Proficiency			
	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree	Total
Business				
University in MD				
Count	16	36	44	96
% within business	16.7	37.5	45.8	100.0
Arizona Corporation				
Count	6	9	13	28
% within business	21.4	32.1*	46.4	100.0
Delaware Division				
Count	3	23	6	32
% within business	9.4	71.9*	18.8	100.0
Maryland Corporation				
Count	9	16	5	30
% within business	30.0	53.3	16.7	100.0
Total				
Count	34	84	68	186
% within business	18.3	45.2	36.6	100.0

Note: χ^2 = 20.757, df = 6.
*p < .005.

Table 5 on training attitudes and perceived job proficiency also has a moderate gamma of .465 with a p < .000 (H2).

Both tables also provide evidence for achieving concurrent validity. In H1, it was expected that those with more updated training would favorably view more training. (See Table 4 to confirm this and see details above.)

H2 predicted that those with strong positive attitudes toward training would also have greater perceived job proficiency. This was confirmed in Table 5 (see details above).

Results

Analysis of gender by training attitudes, work status by proficiency, and business by proficiency were computed. In Table 6, gender by training attitudes resulted in the finding that women (73.6%) had significantly greater positive training attitudes than did men (60.0%) with χ^2 = 6.519, df = 2, p < .05. The results of the work status by proficiency (see Table 7) resulted in the findings that 25.6% of nonexempt/

Table 9. Updated Training by Proficiency

	Proficiency			
	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree	Total
Updated training				
Fully disagree				
Count	10	1	1	12
% within updated training	83.3*	8.3	8.3	100.0
Disagree				
Count	8	19	5	32
% within updated training	25.0	59.4	15.6	100.0
Agree				
Count	12	44	27	83
% within updated training	14.5	53.0	32.5	100.0
Fully agree				
Count	3	10	26	39
% within updated training	7.7*	25.6	66.7	100.0
Total				
Count	33	74	59	166
% within updated training	19.9	44.6	35.5	100.0

Note: γ = .592.
*p < .000.

Table 10. Effective Coaching by Proficiency

	Proficiency			
	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree	Total
Effective coaching				
Fully disagree				
Count	15	5	3	23
% within effective coaching	65.2	21.7	13.0*	100.0
Disagree				
Count	13	25	10	48
% within effective coaching	27.1	52.1	20.8	100.0
Agree				
Count	5	40	24	69
% within effective coaching	7.2	58.0	34.8	100.0
Fully agree				
Count	0	6	15	21
% within effective coaching	0	28.6	71.4*	100.0
Total				
Count	33	76	52	161
% within effective coaching	20.5	47.2	32.3	100.0

Note: γ = .619.
*p < .000.

hourly employees disagreed that they received adequate job training compared with 12.4% of the exempt/salaried employees (χ^2 = 6.310, df = 2, p < .05). The results of the business by proficiency (see Table 8) showed that the Delaware Division (71.9%) compared with Arizona Corporation (31.2%) and the Maryland Corporation (53.3%) had significantly more participants who often agreed that training provided enhanced job proficiency (χ^2 = 20.757, df = 6, p < .005).

Gamma tests assessing the strength of the association of the cross-tabulated data between the following eight comparisons were measured: updated training by training attitudes, updated training by job proficiency, effective coaching by job proficiency, meaningful coaching by job proficiency, meaningful coaching by training attitudes, solicits input by job proficiency, solicits input training attitudes cross-tabulation, and training attitudes proficiency cross-tabulations.

Table 4 shows the relationship between updated training and training attitudes of those who were fully updated on training, 86.8%, had positive training attitudes compared to only 65.06% of those who disagreed with being up-to-date on training. Gamma = .293, p < .05 reveals that there is a moderate, significant relationship between the variables.

The cross-tab of updated training by proficiency shows (see Table 9) a significant and high strength of association between updated training and proficiency. In all, 83.3% fully disagreed that they had updated training and disagreed that

they are proficient, compared with the 7.7% that fully agreed to having updated training and disagreed to being proficient. This shows a significant and strong relationship between updated training and proficiency (γ = .592, p < .000).

Table 10 shows that 71.4% of those who fully agree that they had effective coaching also fully agree that they feel proficient compared with 13.0% who fully disagreed that they had effective coaching. This shows a high and significant correlation between effective coaching variables and effective coaching (γ = .619, p < .000).

The cross-tab between meaningful coaching by proficiency (see Table 11) reveals that 88.9% fully agree they had meaningful coaching and also fully agree that they felt proficient compared with 6.7% who fully disagreed that they had meaningful coaching and fully agreed that they were job proficient. This shows a very strong significant relationship between meaningful coaching and perceived job proficiency (γ = .728, p < .000).

Table 12 shows that those who fully agreed that they had meaningful coaching (94.1%) also revealed experienced positive training attitudes compared with 64.9% of those who disagreed to experiencing meaningful coaching, yet had positive training attitudes, which reveals a moderate and significant relationship (y = .252, p < .10).

Table 13 of solicits input by proficiency demonstrates that 82.4% fully disagreed that their supervisor solicits input from them which lead to less agreement (disagree) on proficiency

Table 11. Meaningful Coaching by Proficiency

	Proficiency			
	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree	Total
Meaningful coaching				
Fully disagree				
Count	10	4	1	15
% within meaningful coaching	66.7	26.7	6.7*	100.0
Disagree				
Count	12	19	6	37
% within meaningful coaching	32.4	51.4	16.2	100.0
Agree				
Count	5	45	22	72
% within meaningful coaching	6.9	62.5	30.6	100.0
Fully agree				
Count	0	2	16	18
% within meaningful coaching	.0	11.1	88.9*	100.0
Total				
Count	27	70	45	142
% within meaningful coaching	19.0	49.3	31.7	100.0

Note: γ = .728.
*p < .000.

Table 12. Meaningful Coaching by Training Attitudes

	Training attitudes			
	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree	Total
Meaningful coaching				
Fully disagree				
Count	3	2	11	16
% within meaningful coaching	18.8	12.5	68.8	100.0
Disagree				
Count	0	13	24	37
% within meaningful coaching	.0	35.1	64.9*	100.0
Agree				
Count	1	22	48	71
% within meaningful coaching	1.4	31.0	67.6	100.0
Fully agree				
Count	0	1	16	17
% within meaningful coaching	.0	5.9	94.1*	100.0
Total				
Count	4	38	99	141
% within meaningful coaching	2.8	27.0	70.2	100.0

Note: γ = .252.
*p < .10.

compared with 1.6% who fully agreed that supervisors solicited their input and disagree that it positively impacted on proficiency. This shows a significant and very strong relationship between bosses who do not solicit input and employees who do not feel proficient (γ = .845, p < .000).

The cross-tab of solicits input and training attitudes (see Table 14) reveals that 83.1% fully agreed that having supervisors solicit input effects training attitudes. Moreover, 52.9% who fully disagreed with solicits input, however, fully agreed that it impacts on training attitudes. This shows a moderate and significant relationship between employers who solicit input and employee attitude about training (γ = .344, p < .005).

The training attitudes and perceived proficiency cross-tab (see Table 5) showed that 80.0% disagreed that they feel positive about training and also disagreed that they feel proficient compared with 13.9% who fully agreed that training was positive and disagreed that they felt proficient. The relationship between training attitude and perceived proficiency showed a moderate and significant correlation (γ = .465, p < .000; see Table 5).

The final analysis analyzed the responses to the open-ended question that solicited requests for potential training topics. A total of 87 participants (22.89% of the total sample) answered the open-ended question: "I would like to have the following training offered." Common themes were soft skill (i.e., leadership, effective communication, mentoring, etc.) and technological training. Out of 87 responses, 47

participants (54%) requested more soft skill training such as leadership, effective communications, and mentoring. A total of 36 participants (41.3%) requested more technological training such as computer programming and software applications. Two participants (2.29%) responded as not having the available time for training due to budget cuts/constraints. One participant (1.14%) requested "any form of training," and 1 (1.14%) participant indicated the need for more "real-world" training. Some participants provided more than one response and others did not indicate a preference, so the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the first hypothesis, those employees with training experiences have positive attitudes about training (training attitudes), and the second hypothesis, positive training attitudes are perceived to improve job proficiency. The results of this study support the hypotheses. The gamma calculations found strong significant associations between those employees who fully agreed that they had updated training and subsequent positive training attitudes, as well a feeling of increased job proficiency. The results also showed that those employees who fully agreed that they received effective coaching and those who fully agreed they received meaningful coaching felt they demonstrated an increase in job proficiency.

Table 13. Solicits Input by Proficiency

| | Proficiency | | | |
	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree	Total
Solicits input				
Fully disagree				
Count	14	1	2	17
% within solicits input	82.4*	5.9	11.8	100.0
Disagree				
Count	14	11	0	25
% within solicits input	56.0	44.0	0	100.0
Agree				
Count	7	50	16	73
% within solicits input	9.6	68.5	21.9	100.0
Fully agree				
Count	1	15	47	63
% within solicits input	1.6*	23.8	74.6	100.0
Total				
Count	36	77	65	178
% within solicits input	20.2	43.3	36.5	100.0

Note: γ = .845.
*p < .000.

Table 14. Solicits Input/Training Attitudes Cross-Tabulation

| | Training attitudes | | | |
	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree	Total
Solicits input				
Fully disagree				
Count	3	5	9	17
% within solicits input	17.6	29.4	52.9*	100.0
Disagree				
Count	0	8	17	25
% within solicits input	.0	32.0	68.0	100.0
Agree				
Count	2	25	46	73
% within solicits input	2.7	34.2	63.0	100.0
Fully agree				
Count	1	10	54	65
% within solicits input	1.5	15.4	83*	100.0
Total				
Count	6	48	126	180
% within solicits input	3.3	26.7	70.0	100.0

Note: γ = .344.
*p < .005.

These results agree with those of Becker and Gerhard, (1996), Bowling (2007), and Davenport (2006), who also suggest that the quality of training has a lot to do with employee's feelings of importance concerning the job.

The results of the questionnaire demonstrated a strong and significant relationship between bosses. This finding also supports the literature that discusses the impact of job training on psychological variables such as motivation and commitment (Cheng & Ho, 2001; Liu, 2002; Pool & Pool, 2007; Wang, 2001), organizational trust (Anschutz, 1995), and willingness to go above and beyond to meet their job requirements (Rowden & Conine, 2005).

Although this study did not directly assess organizational "conflict," it seems clear that because training is seen to be so important in forming positive attitudes that it may further lead to job proficiency, and not receiving adequate training is associated with a feeling of reduced competency, it seems very reasonable to predict that poor training could result in poor attitudes about performance, which then could lead to poor performance. This finding opens up employees to an entire set of potential consequences; one such consequence is conflict in the workplace environment. Other consequences could include poor performance review, lack of organizational trust (because the employee feels unfairly evaluated due to not receiving adequate training for job functions), and the beginning of a downhill spiral leading to

possible termination and subsequent loss of resources for the organization.

Clearly, where job training is concerned, poor fits between employee and the job/organization may result in eventual performance gaps (Harrison, 2005) emphasizing the need for conflict management systems to be in place at all levels of the organization.

Surprisingly, the research did not find significant differences in attitudes between the younger and older employees. However, the research did find significant differences between men and women with respect to overall positive training attitudes. Women, significantly more often than men, indicated positive attitudes toward training. It was not known if these results suggest that women felt that training is more beneficial because of the technical nature of current job demands being placed on women(who may not feel prepared for these demands), or if women are more supportive in general of extra educational offerings than are men. Future research may address this gender-related disparity when developing future training programs.

Although exempt/salary and the nonexempt/hourly employees fully agreed that training was related to job proficiency, when they disagreed, they significantly disagreed. Specifically, nonexempt/hourly employees disagreed more strongly that attitudes were related to job proficiency. Although an interesting finding, more interesting is the

finding that both groups fully agreed at equal levels that attitudes were related to job proficiency, again supporting the original hypotheses.

The finding that the Delaware Division significantly more often agreed that attitude leads to proficiency than did the other three organizations may be explained by the fact that those employees had just completed a job training, which may have affected their position.

Interestingly, in Table 8, the highest fully agreed ratings that attitudes affect proficiency come from the university in Maryland and the Arizona Corporation. This author was told that in the Arizona Corporation, job training occurs very regularly, and for the first three probationary years, employees are expected to pass proficiency tests following each training session to stay employed with the company. An excellent study for future research might investigate whether job training requiring passing proficiency tests as a condition of employment is more valuable than training without the conditional testing criteria.

In summary, this author researched the hypotheses that adequate job training is related to positive attitudes about job proficiency and that having adequate job training is related to positive attitudes about job training. The results have supported the hypotheses. However, given the nature of the research, there are several limitations to this study.

Survey research has many problems associated with its use. Surveys are self-reported instruments and, as such, may not be completely valid or reliable. However, it can be reported that a strong internal consistency of the instrument was confirmed by using both Cronbach's alpha and Guttman's split-half coefficient. Both of these measures provide reliability information when instruments use formats that generate ordinal data.

A major limitation to the interpretation of the results has to do with the instrument (see Appendix B). A close examination of Appendix B shows the direction provided between Questions 5 and 6, "If you have not had training, please skip Questions 6-12." This directive probably should not have been included on this questionnaire because it may have eliminated all those respondents who have never been trained, leaving only respondents who have had some training, effective and ineffective, meaningful and nonmeaningful. Given that industry trains very often, and given that the return rate for the three for-profit organizations was 100%, the missing data came from the Maryland university sample. Only 130 questionnaires out of 380 were returned from the Maryland University. Omitting this directive may have extended the sample from those who had some type of training to include a category for those who had never received training, making the comparison more meaningful. Based on the present finding, one may never know how those "never having training" felt about their competence.

Moreover, it may have been better to have used a true 7-point Likert-type scale, allowing the author to make finer discriminations in the findings.

In addition, the survey could have included more useful demographic information questions as well as questions related to conflict. Specifically, respondents could have been asked if they felt they received the right amount of training, and if that having the right amount of training ever resulted in a negative performance consequences. Respondents could also have been asked questions related to how conflict is mediated in their workplace and how important it was to them to have an actual conflict management system in place in their place of work.

Even though the study could have been methodologically improved in several ways, it is still important to state that this study is one of only a few attempting empirically to answer questions related to the importance of job training. Furthermore, this study is also a first attempt at trying to assess the real importance of job training to the employee and the far-reaching complications of the ensuing conflict in our present day work environments where the employee perceives that meaningful job training is unavailable. Chris Young of Rainmaker Group, Inc. has noted that the "training and development budget is often the first to go and the last to come back" (Young, 2008). Organizations undergoing fiscal challenges may target employee training as the first cost-cutting measure. If we follow the collective wisdom of successful businesses, conflict management system professionals, and the results of this empirical research, one must conclude that effective and ongoing training and development should be the final cost-cutting measure. Training and its positive effects on employee attitude and proficiencies create long-lasting stakeholders and could serve as the binding force for business success during trouble times.

When understanding the connection between employee attitudes about competence and potential organizational conflict, a conflict management system may be the first line of defense to assess and assist in the analysis of the fits and gaps when dealing with the organizational culture of attitude and training.

Cheng and Ho (2001) claim that as a result, "ungraded" employees look for improving their job performance as well as enhancing their future career prospects. Obviously, when employees transfer their positive learning content to their job, a win–win solution for organizations and employees can be accomplished. Therefore, when employees are provided better and more intensive training, the result is an increase in self-worth and greater job performance proficiency. If the employee's perception is one of having sufficient training and development, it may also serve as a catalyst for enhancing the employee teaming effect.

Future research could build on this study's results by measuring quantitatively the actual increases in job performance as well as the actual changes in job proficiency attitudes. This could be accomplished in a simple pretest–posttest design using a control group not having had the training as a comparison group. It would be valuable to connect perception to actual changes in job performance that can be quantified and measured. Attitude studies like this one are limited to representing what the person would be feeling should he or she be in that position, or try to recall what he or she felt when she actually was in that position. More actual behavioral data of this nature might convince upper level management to invest in employee development programs. It is important for employers to provide relevant and meaningful training for the employees, which supports and enhances employee attitude. When training is perceived by the employee to be relevant and meaningful, the results may be demonstrated through improved proficiencies.

When examining the open-ended question on the survey that asked about preferred training programs to be offered, most responders requested training on soft skills, such as leadership, values, effective communications, and so on, and technology training such as, computer literacy, computer updated software programs, and so on. These results of the open-ended question strengthen our position that employees require and desire training that will make them competitive in this highly demanding market.

The present survey was conducted to assess a relationship between attitudes about training and perceived subsequent job proficiency. The data that were collected supported our hypotheses that job training is correlated with positive feelings about job training and that positive job training predicts positive attitudes about job proficiency. Limitations to this study have been considered and suggestions for future research have been provided. Clearly, empirical research in the area of expected job training and resulted job proficiency and potential organizational conflict is only in its infancy. This study has been an important first step in this line of research.

Appendix A

Statement of Approval Committee on Human Research–Addendum

Salisbury

Statement of Approval
Committee on Human Research

Date: May 25, 2010

To: Debra Truitt

Title: ADDENDUM: The More Important Training and Development is to a Person, the More Likely They Will be a Team Player With their Coworkers and a Better Employee to the University

The Committee on Human Research has considered the above application and, on the basis of available evidence, records its opinions as follows:

1. The rights and welfare of individual volunteers are adequately protected.
2. The methods to secure informed consent are fully appropriate and adequately safeguard the rights of the subjects (in the case of minors, consent is obtained from parents or guardians).
3. The investigators are responsible individuals, competent to handle any risks which may be involved, and the potential medical benefits of the investigation fully justify these studies.
4. The investigators assume the responsibility of notifying the Committee on Human Research if any changes should develop in the methodology or the protocol on the research project involving a risk to the individual volunteers.

The application is considered to be:

Exempt, X   Expedited,   Full Committee
provided that no names are used.

George Whitehead

Sincerely
George Whitehead,
Chair Committee on Human Research

Appendix B

Survey

Please be as detailed as possible when answering each question. If you feel uncomfortable answering any of the following questions or feel that any question do not apply to you, please feel free to leave the response space blank and move on to the next question. All the questions are in relation to your work environment at this academic institution.

Once you are finished with your responses to the survey questions, please insert the survey sheet in the provided self-addressed envelope.

(continued)

Appendix B (continued)

Rate your responses according to the scale provided. Please check the appropriate box that applies.	Fully disagree	Disagree	Agree	Fully agree	Not applicable
1. On-the-job training is an effective tool for learning new skills.					
2. Developmental training should include effective communications, team building, and coaching.					
3. Development training should be afforded to all levels and/or positions.					
4. Training and development is important for job growth.					
5. Training and development is important for potential advancement.					
If you have not had training, please skip Questions 6-12.					
6. I receive updated training which is required for my position.					
7. The current training offered is not adequate for my professional needs.					
8. My supervisor conducts effective coaching sessions with me.					
9. My coaching sessions are meaningful and motivational.					
10. I feel valued at my job.					
11. I feel that I am part of the team.					
12. My supervisor solicits my input on issues and opportunities.					
If you have not had a mentor, please skip Questions 13-14.					
13. Having a mentor is important to me.					
14. I meet with my mentor on a scheduled basis.					

Rate your responses according to the scale provided. Please check the appropriate box that applies.	1-2 years	3-9 years	10-19 years	20+ years	
15. Other than professional trade skills the last training course I attended was:					
16. I have been at my current job for:					

Rate your demographics according to the scale provided. Please check the appropriate box that applies.	Male	Female			
17. I am					

	19-49 years	50+ years			
18. My age is:					

	Exempt/ salary	Nonexempt/ hourly			
19. My employment status is:					

Please answer the following question.
20. I would like to have the following training offered:
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Bio

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