

**The existence of training in a selection of Small Medium Enterprises in the South-
East
of Ireland**

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for a B.A.(Hons) in Human Resource
Management**

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July 2005

Authorship Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment of the programme of study leading to the award of B.A. (Hons) in Human Resource Management is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been acknowledged within the text of my own work.

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Abstract

The reason for choosing this project in the small medium enterprise sector (SME), is that very little research has been conducted in the area of training, yet the SME sector, is the sector that is going to produce the vast majority of employment for the foreseeable future. As of 21st of June 2005 there are 300,000 SME in Ireland and half of these enterprises do not have financial problems.

The specific focus of this study is on the training aspect that exists in this sector. It is hoped that with the help of the participants it will reveal what the current situation is in a selection of SME's in the South- East of Ireland which may lead to some recommendations that will be enacted by the respondents if the respondents feel it necessary to do so or wish to do so.

Due to the geographical location of the respondents it was decided to use a quantitative approach because of cost and time constraints. It was felt by the author and respondents that this approach would give a better cross section of responses. The respondents were issued with a questionnaire that comprised of twenty six (26) questions broken down into the four (4) main sections of training. Those sections were: training pre-requisite; training needs analysis; design and implementation and finally evaluation.

Some of the main findings and conclusions were as follows.

While a lot of literature states that owners and managers feel training is irrelevant and unnecessary all of the respondents conduct training.

Evaluation is conducted by ninety seven per cent (97%) of respondents but seems to be conducted without proper understanding of what this evaluation is trying to achieve.

This study did reveal more conclusions, which are explained in more detail in chapters six and seven.

Acknowledgement

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my wife Síle for all her patience and understanding, while completing this thesis and also to my twin daughters Olra, Anna and my youngest daughter Méabh.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis was undertaken to see how training exists in a selection of SME's in the South- East of Ireland. By gathering the findings from the research, the author hoped to reveal some practical examples that could be introduced into the respondents workplace to improve the training aspect of those participating organisations.

The reason for looking specifically at the SME sector was three-fold. The first reason was that the author is employed in this sector and understands the problems facing these organisations and by working in this sector can make this thesis practical to use and inform the respondents. The second reason is that according to Hardiman (2005, p.26) there are now 300,000 SME, s in Ireland today and as Smith and Whittaker (1998, p.176) found that it is widely accepted that SME 's are now considered to be essential to the development of a countries economic performance. Finally, a lot of research has being conducted on large enterprises in the area of human resources yet with such strong statements as to the importance of the SME sector, very little has being conducted in the human resource area in the this sector.

This thesis looks at the literature that exists about the SME sector. The first part of the thesis looks at SME's in general and the problems associated with what is a proper definition of an SME. It then proceeds to look at a comparison of SME's versus their larger counterpart. It also explores what type of management styles exist in the SME sector and gives a brief overview of how human resources exist in the SME sector, but the primary aim of this study is to concentrate on the training area of human resources. The training area will look briefly at how training exists in the SME sector, but then focus on four (4) key areas of training, these areas consist of pre training requisite; training needs analysis; design and implementation of training and finally evaluation. The reason for choosing the training area is according to IBEC (2002, p.55) training plays a pivotal role in an organisation achieving its objectives and traditionally training has being seen as irrelevant and unnecessary by owners or managers of SME's.

Chapter 2

2.1 Introduction

Vinten, Lane & Hayes (1997, p.7), Smith & Whittaker (1998, p176) and Curran, Berney & Kuuisto (1999, p.10) indicate that it is now widely accepted that SME's are considered to be essential to the development of a country's economic performance. Johnston & Loader (2003, p.273) suggest that SME's account for ninety nine per cent (99%) of businesses in the United Kingdom, with an annual turnover of 1,250 billion Euros, representing forty five per cent (45%) of the private sector. Curran, Berney and Kuuisto (1999, p.4) state that in Ireland, SME's account for 99.4 per cent of all employment in the private sector. Equality Authority Report (2000, p.12)(E.A) stated that there was 191,000 SME's comprising of 800,000 workers, but according to Hardiman (2005, p.26) this has substantially risen to 300,000 SME's.

2.2 Definitions of SME's

Hill & Stewart (2000, p.105), suggest that defining an SME is difficult and suggest that definitions vary significantly. Wilkinson (1999, p.3) states that many definitions of SME's suggest that they are homogenous, which is not the fact, a point that is further supported by Curran, Berney and Kuuisto (1999, p.14). McMahon (1994, p.129) suggests that the most influential studies carried out in relation to the SME sector were, Ingham (1970) and the Bolton report (1971). McMahon (1994, p.129) suggests that Ingham defines the SME in terms of the employment relationship. McMahon (1994, p.130) suggests that the relationship is one of harmony and satisfaction, where the employees seek to gain more of intrinsic rewards as opposed to extrinsic rewards. Brady 1984 (cited in MacMahon 1994, p.131) has found evidence that this relationship in SME's might not be what one expects, harmony exists but not in all SME's. Brady 1984 (cited in MacMahon 1994, p.131) found evidence that SME's have considerable employment problem relationships, which is supported by Goss 1991 (cited in MacMahon 1994, p.130).

Burns & Dewhurst (1996, p.3) suggests the Bolton Report (1971) defines SME's in two ways. The first definition is the economic definition, which defines SME's as companies who have a small market share; are managed by owners or part owners in a personalised way and are finally independent of other companies. The second

definition is based solely on turnover and the number of employees but is composed of further definitions to cover various sectors. These range from under 200 employees for manufacturing firms to over £50,000 turnover for retailers and up to five vehicles or less for transport. Storey (1994, p.25) suggest some criticisms of the Bolton Report. Once you have reached 100 employees it becomes impossible to manage in a personalised way.

While Ingham (1970) and The Bolton Report (1971) were very influential in looking and defining SME's, one must look at other definitions to show the problems, of what constitutes an SME.

European definition is composed of the following, (see table 2.1).

Table 2.1		European Commissions definition of SME	
Number of employees		Defined as	
0-9		Micro Firms	
10-49		Small Firms	
50-249		Medium Firms	
250+		Large Firms	

Source: Journal of European Industrial Training (2000, p.106)

The French definition of SME's is as follows (see table 2.2)

Table 2.2		French definition of SME's	
Number of Employee's		Defined as	
Less than 10		Very small Firm	
10-40		Small Firm	
50-500		Medium Firm	
500+		Large Firm	

Source: Barrow (1998, p4)

The Irish definition of SME's is as follows (see table 2.3)

Table 2.3		Irish definition of SME	
Number of employees		Defined as	
0-49		Small Firm	
50-199		Medium Firm	
200+		Large Firm	

Source: Barrow (1998, p4)

Barrow (1998, p.4) show definitions vary from place to place adding to the complexity of trying to define an SME.

Burns & Dewhurst (1996, p.200) have found that on the continent, of the twelve countries of the European Community at that time, SME's account for fourteen million enterprises comprising of ninety two million employees. Fernald, Solomon & Bradley (1999, p.1) found that in the United States between 1992-1996 twelve million jobs were created and out of that figure 9.5 million were created in small, medium enterprises. Overell 1996 (cited in Wilkinson 1999, p.1), and Hermann & Landstrom (1998, p.3), state that the future will be dominated by SME's in terms of job creation and new patterns of work. Task Force Survey (TFS) (1993, p.ii) states that time has come to give small businesses a central place in policy decision making. While all of the above mentioned facts, show the importance of SME's to the economic performance of a country, Wilkinson (1999, p.1) and Spence (2000, p.5), state that very little research has been conducted in the SME sector. Yet according to Irish Independent (February 24th, 2005) out of the top fifty companies to work for in Ireland 43% of those enterprises, consisting of 173 employees or less and the top company over all, Boston Scientific has only 187 employees.

2.3 SME's versus Large Companies

When considering SME's it is important to view how SME's compare to their larger counterparts in some features. Burns and Dewhurst (1996, p.4) state that SME's have some characteristics that differentiate them from their larger counterparts. SME's are not always limited companies and could have problems raising finances. SME's may

not always limited companies and could have problems raising finances. SME's may often be over reliant on some customers. Most firms are less unlikely to exert influence over their market. There also could be a case for "empire building", while Burns and Dewhurst (1996, p.5) suggest the negativities, Viten, Lane and Hayes (1997) suggest some positives.

Arthur (1995, p.33), and Vinten, Lane and Hayes (1997, p.8), suggest that small firms have a competitive advantage over their larger counterparts because of the lack of bureaucracy and their more efficient informal communications. Vinten, Lane & Hayes (1997, p.9) suggests that the structure in SME's are characterised by lower levels of horizontal and vertical complexity.

Viten, Lane & Hayes (1997, p.9) suggest that culture will play a major role in what sort of an adoption of HRM practices will be adopted in an organisation. TFS (1994, p.4) states that there is greater commitment from the owners of the company due in the main to the owners personal money funding the company, often mortgages and personal savings are two of the many areas of finance. TFS (1994, p.5) also suggest that owners spent more time working and watching than its employees. Teroivski (2003, p.81) suggest that SME's can adopt a large approach and still remain small to service their niche by establishing network practices.

2.4 Management Styles

Burns and Dewhurst (1996, p.4) suggest, the owners have a huge influence on the organisation, with this in mind it is necessary to consider the style of management, that these people may adopt towards Human Resource Management (HRM).

McMahon (1994, p.134) describes four types of management styles found in SME's.

Fraternalism reflects a high level of employer dependence upon employee's skills and knowledge. The dependence on these skills and knowledge is heightened when there is a labour shortage.

Paternalism is where an employer is not dependent on the labour force, and the employer can invoke their right to make decisions unchallenged. It also clearly defines who is the boss and has the power.

Benevolent Autocracy is where the employment relationship is cherished, but only within the confines of the workplace, it does not extend to outside the workplace.

Sweating is where a dictatorship style is adopted, benefits are seen as unnecessary and employees can be recruited without haste.

2.5 Human Resource Management and SME's

Vinten, Lane and Hayes (1997, p.5) state that HRM is very important in SME's. With this in mind it is necessary to look in brief, at how HRM policies exist in SME's in order to get a complete overview of what is happening in SME's.

HRM is defined as follows:

'HRM as an integrated approach to the management of the intellectual capital: the people towards achieving the organisational goals and objectives'

Source: Armstrong (2001, p.4)

Scarborough and Zimmerer (1996, p.769) suggest that HRM, consists of the following areas, Human Resources Planning (HRP), Recruitment and Selection (R&S), Training, Compensation, Performance Appraisal and Termination. Osborne (1996, p.17) adds another area that of Health and Safety (H&S) and Employee Relations (ER).

Human Resource Planning

Reid & Adams (2001, p.4) have found that attaining best practice is seen by SME's as impossible. Reid & Adams (2001, p.8) found that only fifty per cent (50%) of heads of HRM, sits on the board. Wilkinson (1999, p.210), found that the informal way management adopt HRM practices is largely down to the type of management in the organisations, mainly the Unitary view, where problems are dealt with when there is deviation from the objectives or where the owner feels the change is necessary, 'what

is good for business is good for employees'. Vinten, Lane & Hayes (1997, p.7), found that succession planning is absent. Ritchie 1993 (cited in Wilkinson 1999, p.208), suggest that a very small number of SME's prioritise the management of its workforce. Paulsen 1994 (cited in Penn et al. 1998, p.134) found that planning in SME's in Europe was very weak.

Compensation

Gunnigle 1989 (cited in McMahon 1994, p.143) has found that when it comes to remuneration SME's are reactive instead of proactive. Vinten, Lane & Hayes (1997, p.16) suggest that pay is determined by the value added by a persons position in the company. Vinten, Lane & Hayes (1997, p.19) found that a lot of employers feel that intrinsic rewards are better than extrinsic rewards

Performance Appraisal

Vinten, Lane & Hayes (1997, p.8) found that some SME's employ full time health professionals to look after employees health thus increasing productivity. Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC), (2002, p.22) show that fifty five per cent (55%) of small firms, seventy-eight per cent (78%) of medium firms have formal performance procedures.

Employee Relations

Wilkinson (1999, p.212) suggests that communication strategies are non-existent. Millard et al 1992 (cited in McMahon 1994, p.138) found that small firms are less likely to have formal procedures than its larger counterpart. Vinten, Lane & Hayes (1997, p.5) found that the key to people management in SME's is where the owner can link the objectives of the firm to employee satisfaction. Vinten, Lane & Hayes (1997, p.19) suggest that employers feel they have to adopt a paternalistic role towards their employees.

Recruitment

Carroll 1995 (cited in Wilkinson 1999, p.5), and Scarborough & Zimmerer (1999, p.771) found recruitment is carried out through a network of family and employee friends so as to get the 'right worker'. Goss 1991 (cited in McMahon 1994, p.139,

found that the employees recruited by SME's are less experienced and the small business was not their first choice. Vinten, Lane & Hayes (1997, p.14) found that SME's have adopted part-time working and job sharing. Vinten, Lane & Hayes (1997, p.15) found that the main recruitment medium is local papers. Vinten, Lane & Hayes (1997, p.16) found that SME's rate recruitment specialists as unnecessary. Vinten, Lane and Hayes (1997, p.20) found that SME's employ for the long term.

Industrial Relations

Roberts et al 1992 (cited in Wilkinson 1999, p.210) suggest that the relationship in SME's is of a personal nature, where the harmonious relationship comes into play. Scott et al 1989 (cited in McMahon 1994, p131) points out that conflict is not accepted and that if it occurs it is the employees attitude that is the problem.

Health and Safety

Hayes (2003, p.10) suggest that small firms have a strong commitment to this area on two fronts avoiding economic loss and human loss.

Due to constraints of this thesis it would be impossible to look at all areas, so this thesis will concentrate on Training. White Paper on Adult Education, (2000, p.17) found

' that skill shortages in term of new entrants into the workforce as well as the skills of those already in the workplace are now a major barrier to sustainable development of the Irish economy'

Source: White Paper on Adult Education, (2000, p.17)

The above statement coupled with the threat of globalisation McIver consulting report (2004, ch4 p.17) have increased the importance of skills and training in the SME sector.

2.6 Training

Armstrong (2001, p.543) defines training as a structure event aimed at changing the trainees skills through a process of education and planned process. Armstrong (2001, p.543) suggests that training is all about developing the intellectual skills of the organisation, so as to achieve better performance. IBEC (2002, p.55) suggest that training plays a pivotal role in the organisations achieving its objectives and also any employer who invests in this area will benefit. IBEC HRM survey, 2004 (cited in McGinty, 2005) has shown that employers are spending more on training. IBEC (2002, p56) found that the average spend on training was 3.15 per cent which does not show a huge increase when compared to the survey by Morley, Gunnigle and Turner (1999/2000) which found that expenditure on training varies from .5 per cent of wages to over four per cent (4%) of payroll. When compared to Burns & Dewhurst (1998, p.215) it shows that investment in Ireland is far more impressive when compared to France 1.76 per cent, England 1.29 per cent and Germany 1.45 per cent. IBEC (2002, p.55) found that the average number of days spent on training is between three and five, but according to the IBEC (2004, p.12) it has not changed. IBEC (2002, p.58), found that the top three drivers for training prior to the survey were; staff motivation/retention, technological change and customer service. McGinty (2005, p.1) found that the top three (3) priorities for the next twelve months (12) were managing performance, health and safety and customer service, with less emphasis on technology, which shows no change to (IBEC, 2002, p.36)

Training in SME's

Viten, Lane & Hayes (1997, p.16) have found that a lot of owner/managers find training irrelevant and unnecessary. Wilkinson (1999, p.209) found that the traditional emphasis in SME's was achieving sales rather than removing employees for training. Yet Viten, Lane & Hayes (1997, p.10) have also found that SME's recognise the importance of the training function within HRM but this has being neglected in SME's. IBEC 2000 (cited in McIver consulting report ch6, p.24) have cast a little doubt over this, as the evidence seems to suggest that SME's are beginning to spend more on training than the larger companies, due to the fact that they have recognised that upgrading staff is the way to maintain the competitive advantage. IBEC (2002, p.57) supports this point and found that the average spend on training in companies

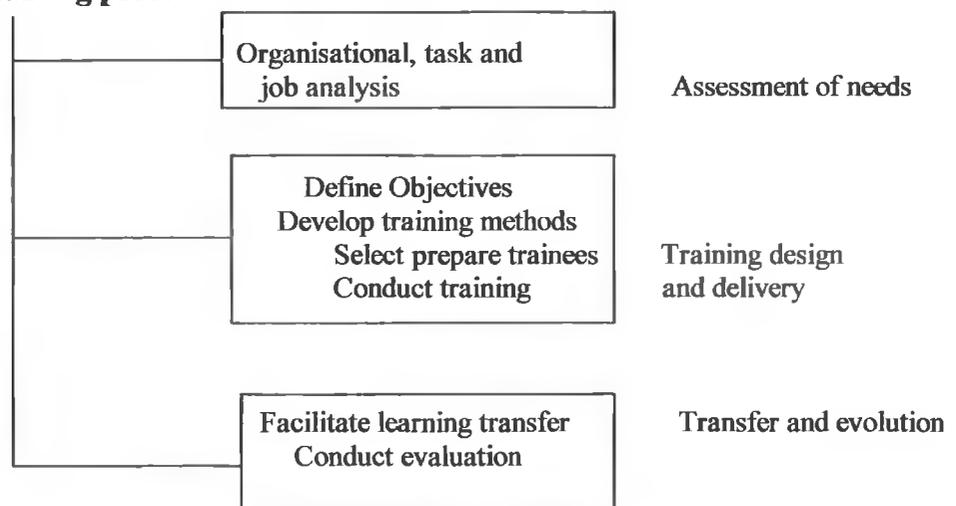
with less than fifty (50) employees was three per cent (3%), companies with fifty (50) to two hundred and forty (240) employees spent 3.4% and those over two hundred and fifty employees (250) spent three per cent (3%). Gunnigle, Heraty & Morley (1997, p.179), and Armstrong (2001, p.155) state that just like SME's, trainees are not homogenous and each person brings their individuality and personality to the process. Scarborough & Zimmerer (1996, p.776), and Stredwick (2002, p.110) suggest that induction is an effective way of training employees in SME's.

Reid and Harris (2004, p.444) have found that in SME's, training is seen as being costly and so the training is targeted at those that are going to stay for the long term. Paulsen et al 1994 (cited in Penn et al 1998, p.135) found that while SME's are the growth area, most have no Human Resource Development plans for the long term.

Pre Training Requisite

Gunnigle, Heraty & Morley (1997, p.179), and Munford 1986 (cited in Gunnigle, Heraty & Morley 1997, p.180), suggest that failure to take account of different learning styles can have serious negative implications for the training process. Armstrong (2001, p.537) suggest that for training to be successful and effective five (5) requirements must be met; learner is motivated to learn; the organisational culture supports and encourages learning; the employees will benefit from support and feedback; learning will be most effective if it satisfies the needs of the learner.

Planned Training process



Source: (Gunnigle, Heraty & Morley 1997, p.181)
(Gunnigle, Heraty & Morley 2002, p.227)

Training Needs Analysis

Gunnigle, Heraty & Morley (1997,p.181), Armstrong (2001, p.549), Gunnigle, Heraty and Morley (2002, p.227), and IBEC (2004, p.8) all suggest that Training Needs Analysis is the first step in a successful training process. Gunnigle, Heraty & Morley (1997, p.181), and Armstrong (2001, p.551) suggest that Training Needs Analysis is all about identifying the gap between the present skills and the desired level of skills.

Robbins 1978 (cited in IBEC 2004, p.9) state that to carry out a proper Training needs analysis, the following four questions must be asked. First, what are the companies goals; second, what jobs are need to achieve the goals/objectives; third what is needed from the employee to achieve their job successfully and finally what deficiencies in knowledge/skills does the employee have, in order to perform the job in hand. IBEC (2004, p.9) also suggest that for a training needs analysis to be effective, the employee must embrace and accept their deficiencies, in order to acquire the necessary skills.

Boydell & Leary (1999, pp.126-171), Armstrong (2001, p552), and Stredwick (2002, p.116) suggest that training needs analysis occurs at three levels; Organisational, Job and Individual.

Organisational level seems to mean a combination of the following. Stredwick (2001, p.116) suggest it encompasses what training is required in the organisation; second, Gunnigle, Heraty and Morley (1997, p.182) suggest it entails looking at the organisation and its capability to train and finally Arthur (1995, p.247) suggest it entails what the long term and short-term objectives are.

Job level seems to mean a combination of the following. Armstrong (2001, p.552) suggests performance and development reviews, Stredwick (2001, p.156) suggests it requires looking at what training is required to do specific jobs and finally IBEC (2004, p.9) suggests that it entails also interviews with manager and supervisors.

Individual level means the following. Stredwick (2001, p.116) suggests it has to do with what training can help employees improve or meet their job requirements, Arthur (1995, p.247) suggests it entails designing training specifically to meet individuals

requirements, IBEC (2004, p.9) found that this also includes looking at assessment centres to mention a few, IBEC (2004, p.10) suggests questionnaires are also found to be an effective way of eliciting information.

IBEC (2004, p.8) state that training will not fill that gap in performance but the training need analysis will identify the gaps that can be filled by training, so the organisation can achieve its objectives.

Design and implementation of training

Armstrong (2001, p.557), Gunnigle, Hearty & Morley (2002, p.229), and IBEC (2004, p.13) state that once the training needs analysis is finished, the next procedure is to design the training objectives. Armstrong (2001, p.557) suggests that the objective should be defined in terms of what the trainee can do in the workplace after completion of the course.

Scarborough & Zimmerer (1996, p.776), and Armstrong (2001, p.558) suggest that the place of training needs to be considered and that training occurs in two broad areas; on- the-job training and off-the-job training. Armstrong (2001, p.558) suggest that in-company, on-the-job training, is training that mainly consists of teaching or coaching by members of the organisation. Armstrong (2001, p.558) states that this is the only way open to organisations if they want to develop specific skills within the organisation. Much of the training can take place informally and practically. One disadvantage is that the quality of training is influenced by the trainer. Armstrong (2001, p.559) suggests in-company off-the-job training, comprises of sending employees to centres off site which are specifically equipped to train people for the organisation. One disadvantage with this system is that very often trainees find it hard to convert rhetoric into reality. Armstrong (2001 pp.559-560) suggests external, off-the-job training is normally used for enhancing the knowledge of people, by using specialists from outside that otherwise would be uneconomic for the organisation. Again one main disadvantage is converting rhetoric into reality.

Gunnigle, Heraty & Morley (2002, p.249), and IBEC (2004, p.13) found that the choice of training techniques open to an organisation is immense and so the training

method selected must reflect how a trainee learns. Gunnigle, Heraty & Morley (1997, p.184) suggests that one major problem which occurs is, employers choose the training method before the participant is chosen. Armstrong (2001, p.558) states that the selection of the training method must also consider the following; first, content of the programme, which should be based solely on the Training Needs Analysis and finally the length of the programme, depends on the content.

Armstrong (2001, pp.892-3), and Gunnigle, Heraty & Morley (2002, p.231) suggests that on-the-job training is all about coaching, mentoring and job rotation. Stredwick (2002, p.118) suggests that mentoring and coaching is what this area of on-the-job training is comprised of (see Appendix one (1), for explanation of above).

Armstrong (2001, pp.893-4) suggest that in company off-the-job techniques are composed of the following, action learning, assignment, job instruction, computer based training, video (see appendix one (1), for explanation of above)

Armstrong (2001, pp.899-906) suggest that external off-the-job training is composed of the following, Lecture, Discussion, Case study, role playing, simulation and T-group training, (see Appendix one (1), for explanation of above), this is supported in part by Arthur (1996, pp.253-263) and, Gunnigle, Heraty & Morley (2002, p.231).

Tiernan, Morley & Foley (2001, p.217) agree with all of the above mentioned training techniques but has grouped all techniques into one block.

In addition to areas mentioned above by Armstrong (2001, pp. 899-906), Morley, Gunnigle & Turner (1999/2000, p.18) found that training was also implemented by a number of other mediums, employee requests, performance appraisals, line management requests, training audits and future business.

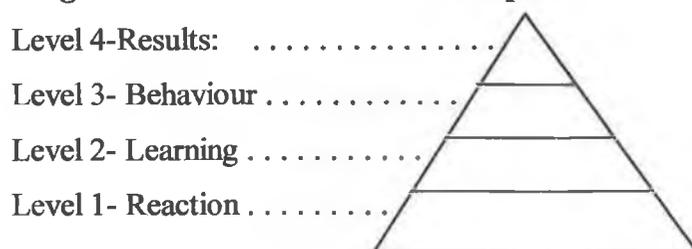
Evaluation

Armstrong (2001, p.57) suggest that evaluation is important and an integral part of training. Gunnigle, Heraty & Morley (2002, p.232), and IBEC (2004, p.16) suggest that evaluation ensures control over the training process, assessment of the overall impact of training and assesses the overall added value of training. Morley, Gunnigle & Turner (1999/2000, p.18) found that even though evaluation is important, eleven per cent (11%) of respondents never evaluate, forty two per cent (42%) sometimes evaluate, with only thirteen per cent (13%) evaluating all of the time. Gunnigle, Heraty & Morley (1997, p.187) suggest that inappropriate evaluation can lead to ineffective training and financial wastage.

Kirkpatrick 1994 (cited in Armstrong 2001, p.570), and Kirkpatrick 1994 (cited in IBEC 2004, p.16) suggests that training must be evaluated at four levels (see diagram 1.1).

Diagram 1.1

Kirkpatrick Evaluation Model



Level 1- Reaction- This entails immediate evaluation of the training by those who participated and whether they were happy with the training or not. It is the delegates personal view of the training. The advantage of this evaluation is that it provides a straight forward technique. Farrell, Stormer & Kirwan (2003, p25) found that this type of evaluation is usually highly structured and asks open ended questions, covering areas such as trainer's performance, training methods used, etc and is normally carried out with conclusion of the course (see appendix two (2) for evaluation form from Farrell, Stormer & Kirwan (2003, p.25).

Level 2- Learning- IBEC (2004, p.16) suggest this involves measuring how skills and knowledge have improved. The usage of tests before and after should be used to elicit

this information. Farrell, Stormer & Kirwan (2003, p.26) suggest that knowledge transfer is normally some form of self-assessment test. It is normally composed of three areas. The first, a simple questionnaire; second multiple-choice questionnaire and finally an open ended questionnaire. All questionnaires are used to get specific data in different areas. Farrell, Stormer & Kirwan (2003, p.26) suggest that the main purpose of this evaluation type is to ensure that the necessary skills have been achieved (see appendix two (2) for evaluation form from Farrell, Stormer & Kirwan (2003, p.25).

Level 3-Behaviour- This entails the extent to which knowledge, skills and attitudes have been transferred from the classroom to the workplace. Time should be allowed for this transfer, IBEC (2004, p.19) suggest that three (3)- six (6) months is adequate. Observation, questionnaires and interviews are some methods suggested to evaluate this level (see appendix two (2) for evaluation form from Farrell, Stormer & Kirwan (2003, p.25).

Level 4- Results- Kirkpatrick 1994(cited in Armstrong p.571) this is the ultimate level of evaluation and provides the basis for assessing the benefits of the training against the costs. The evaluation has to be based on before and after measures, examples such as increase in productivity, reduction in accidents to mention a few (see appendix two (2), for evaluation form from Farrell, Stormer & Kirwan (2003, p.25).

IBEC (2004, p.17) have found that there are many evaluation techniques but the evaluation technique used by the organisation depends on the purpose of the evaluation.

2.7 Barriers to Training

McIver Consulting Report (2004, ch6 p.24) found that deficiencies in training seem to be more prevalent in SME's. This was due to a number of reasons. Matlay (2002, p.365) found that SME's owner/managers fear that training will lead to the employees, especially non-family employees being poached by another employer. White paper 1997 (cited in McIver consulting report 2004, p.24), found that information on the benefits of training is not widely available. IBEC 2000 (cited in McIver consulting report 2004, p.25) found that there are issues regarding the availability of suitable

training. McIver consulting report (2004, ch6 p.25) found that traditionally SME's tend to rely on state support for training, which is minimal compared to initiatives for the unemployed. Finally, IBEC (2000, p.3) found that SME's find it difficult to release staff for training without disruption to the workplace.

2.8 Advantages of training

Devins, Johnson & Sutherland (2004, p.453) found that training increased the confidence of employees in the workplace. Second, Devins, Johnson & Sutherland (2004, p.456) found that employees do see the benefits they get from training. Third, IBEC (2004, p.21) suggests that training allows a levelling of skills in the workplace. Fourth, IBEC (2004, p.21) suggests that training increases the functional flexibility of staff. Finally, IBEC (2004, p.55) suggests that training gives a better impression of the organisation to future employees.

The list of advantages of training is never ending. The listed above is what the author considers important to himself.

2.9 Emerging Trends

Due to the exhaustive list of emerging trends the author has picked four emerging trends that seem to be gaining prominence and are effective for SME's.

- Action Learning (Moran 2002, p.30-31)
- Mentoring (IBEC 2004, p.18)
- Coaching (IBEC2004, p.19)
- Computer Based training (SFA 2002, ch3 p.8)

For a more detailed explanation of action learning, mentoring, coaching and computer based training (see appendix one (1)).

In conclusion, McIver consulting (2004, p.12) suggest that according to Skillnets (2001), the challenge lies in convincing SME's that the advantages of training outweigh their concerns.

Chapter 3

3.1 Research Objective

The objective of this research is to establish how training exists in a selection of SME's in the south –east of Ireland, and by gathering this information, it may enable the author to come up with recommendations that may enhance training in the authors organisation and the respondents organisations.

3.2 Research Methodology

It was decided to use a quantitative approach as opposed to a qualitative approach.

Quantitative research is defined as

' an investigation to discover how many people hold similar views or display particular characteristics'.

Source: Hill & O' Sullivan (1999, p.141)

Mitchell (1998, p.22) suggest that the two main categories of quantitative techniques used in the private sector are: mapping and surveys. For the purpose of this study the author has decided to use the survey technique. The reason for this is three-fold.

Firstly, due the geographical location of the respondents it would be extremely expensive and time consuming to use a qualitative approach, because it would entail a lot of travelling. The reason why there would be a lot of travelling is that to get a sample it would entail a lot of interviews to which the author had not the time nor the finances. Also due to the time constraints placed on the author it would be impossible to achieve a good sample.

Secondly, to get a more effective picture of what is happening in the training field, it was decided by the author and a selection of the respondents that the quantitative approach would yield a better and more effective picture. The main reason for this was that it was felt that a questionnaire would not put as much pressure on the respondents, whose time is precious, as an interview and so would yield more honest and effective answers.

Finally, Mitchell (1998, p.22) suggests that the quantitative approach will yield statistics that make people believe that the findings are true.

Aaker, Kumar & Day (2001, p.243) found that postal questionnaires, generally yield greater results than a qualitative approach due in the main to the respondents filling out the questionnaire at their own leisure and not under pressure.

3.3 Implementation of the Research Questionnaire

Prior to designing the questionnaire the author made contact by the following mediums, face to face, telephone and e-mail with the sample population to ask for their co-operation in the completion of the survey.

Kent (1999, p.30) suggest that a sample is a vital component in relation to the overall objective and of the quality of the research.

A sample is defined as:

‘ those individuals chosen from the population of interest as the subjects in an experiment or to be the respondents of a survey’.

Source: Tull & Hawkins (1993, p.15)

One hundred (100) surveys were despatched to sample population. Tull and Hawkins (1993, p.537) state that to be complete, a population sample must be defined in terms of element, sampling units, extent and time. The sample consisted of owners or managers from the SME sector in the South-East of Ireland. The sampling unit consisted of organisations that lie within the Irish definition of an SME. The extent of the population consisted of a selection of SME's in the South – East of Ireland. The survey was carried out in May 2005 .It was explained to the respondents that the survey would be despatched in April/May 2005, with a turn around time of seven to ten days. The respondents were then contacted two days before the return date of the survey, so as to remind them of the questionnaire, a point that is reinforced by Aaker, Kumar and Day (2001, p.242). All surveys posted contained a self stamped address envelopes. The respondents were also given the opportunity to accept the survey via e-

mail. Of the surveys despatched ninety seven per cent (97%) were e-mailed, two per cent (2%) were delivered personally and one per cent (1%) by post.

3.4 Design of Questionnaire

A questionnaire is defined as:

' a standard set of questions designed to gather data that are relevant to the research objective '

Source: Hill & O'Sullivan (1999, P.141)

Hill & O' Sullivan (1999, pp.134-136) suggests there are a number of questions that can be used in a questionnaire: open-ended questions, closed questions and scaled questions. Open- ended questions consist of allowing the respondents to respond to the question without any pre-empting or guidance. Closed questions, consists of giving the respondent a choice to answer from. Finally scaled questions, consist of allowing the respondents to express their opinions or level of agreement or disagreement with a particular question. Tull & Hawkins (1993, p.356) suggest, that the first questions should be simple and a way of easing the respondent into the survey and that they don't feel threatened. Following on the next set of questions followed in a logic order, with all sections being completed before moving onto other areas, so as to avoid confusion

The questionnaire was divided into five areas, general questions about training, training pre- requisite, training needs analysis, design and implementation of training and evaluation and during the design phase all of the above mentioned areas were considered. The questionnaire consisted of twenty-five questions (25) consisting of open-ended questions, closed questions and scaled questions. After each question an instruction was inserted on how to answer the question. (See appendix Three (3))

3.5 Pilot Survey

Tull & Hawkins (1993, p.361) suggest that it is essential to pilot/ pretest the questionnaire, because the pretest will detect any discrepancies that the author may have missed. Aaker, Kumar & Day (2001, p.319) state that the author has to be able to

handle effective but critical feedback. Once the questionnaire was completed it was despatched to ten (10) respondents across the sampling units. A debriefing exercise was carried out by the author as suggested by Tull & Hawkins (1993, p.361) in which some changes were conducted. It was suggested to reduce the questionnaire by an average of five questions (5) from thirty one (31) to twenty six (26) as it was expressed that the questionnaire could be too long. This was carried and the new questionnaire was despatched late May with a covering letter. This letter explained what was needed and a return date was also stipulated (see Appendix three (3)).

Chapter 4

4.1 General

When asked what is the workforce numbers the research revealed the following (see figure 4.1).

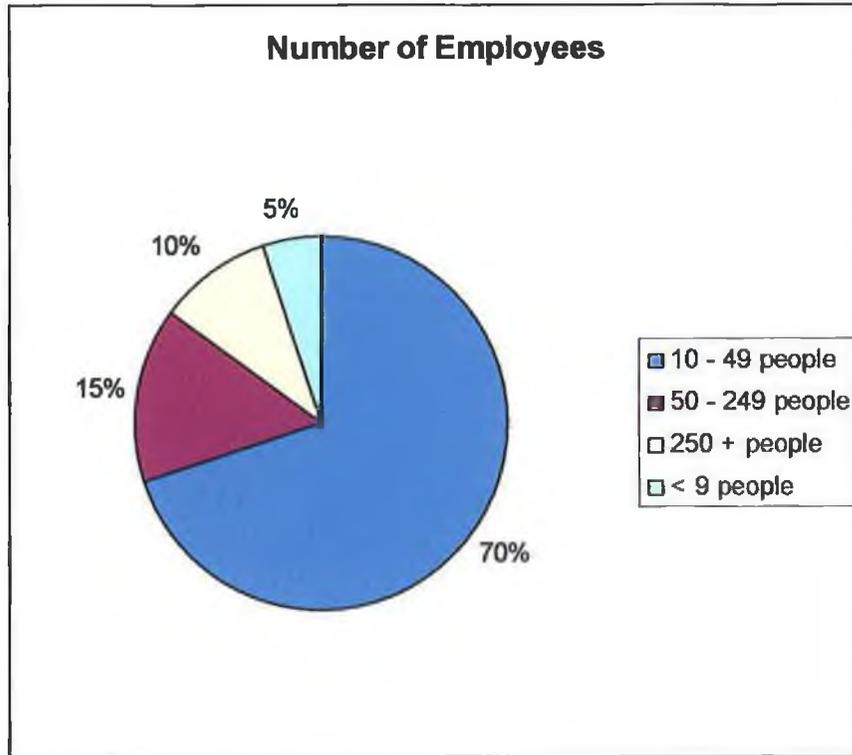


Figure 4.1: How many employees do you employ?

As figure 4.1 shows, seventy per cent (70%) of respondents were from companies that employed between ten (10) to forty nine people (49), while fifteen per cent (15%) of respondents employed between fifty (50) to two hundred and forty nine people (249), while ten per cent (10%) of respondents employed two hundred and fifty (250) plus and finally five (5) per cent of respondents employed less than nine people.

On the question of who is in charge of the training the research showed the following (see figure 4.2).



Figure 4.2: Who is in charge of the training?

Figure 4.2 shows, seventy two per cent (72%) of respondents stated that the Human Resource Department dictates the training, while eighteen per cent (18%) of respondents revealed that managers drive the training, with only five per cent (5%) of respondents stating that the training officer drove the training programme, with five per cent (5%) of respondents stating that they don't know is in charge of training.

When the respondents were asked what was the spend on training it varied significantly (see figure 4.3).

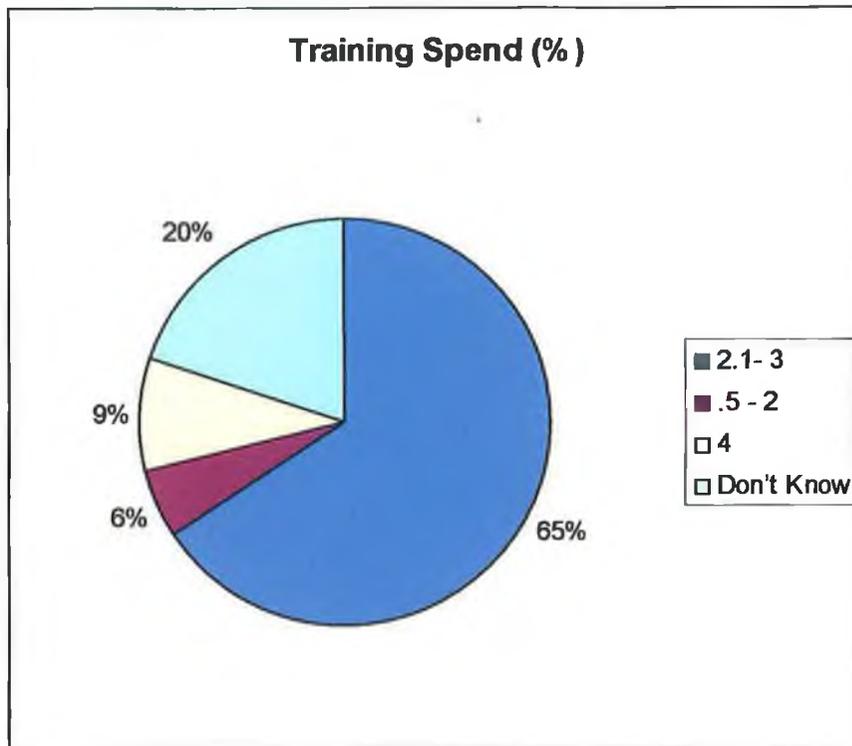


Figure 4.3: What was the average spend on training?

Figure 4.3 shows, sixty five per cent (65%) of respondents spent an average of between 2.1- three per cent (3%) of pay roll on training, while nine per cent (9%) spent four per cent (4%) of payroll and above on training. Six per cent (6%) of respondents spent between .5- two per cent (2%) of payroll on training. Quite surprisingly a massive twenty per cent (20%) did not know what the spend was on training.

When asked what was the average length of a training programme the respondents revealed the following (see figure 4.4).

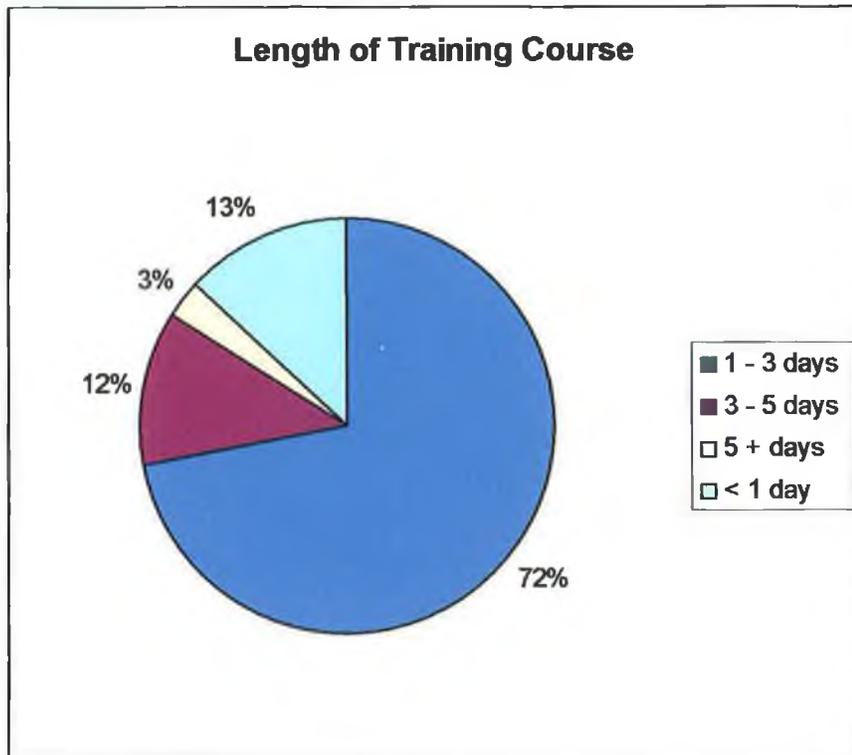


Figure 4.4: What is the average length of a training course?

Figure 4.4, the most popular at seventy two per cent (72%) of respondents length for a training course was between one (1) to three (3) days, twelve per cent (12%) of respondents revealed that training courses last three (3) to five (5) days, with only three per cent (3%) suggesting that the training course last five (5) days and more and finally thirteen per cent (13%) of respondents training courses lasted less than one (1) day.

When respondents were asked as to what dictated the need to conduct training the results were as follows (see figure 4.5).

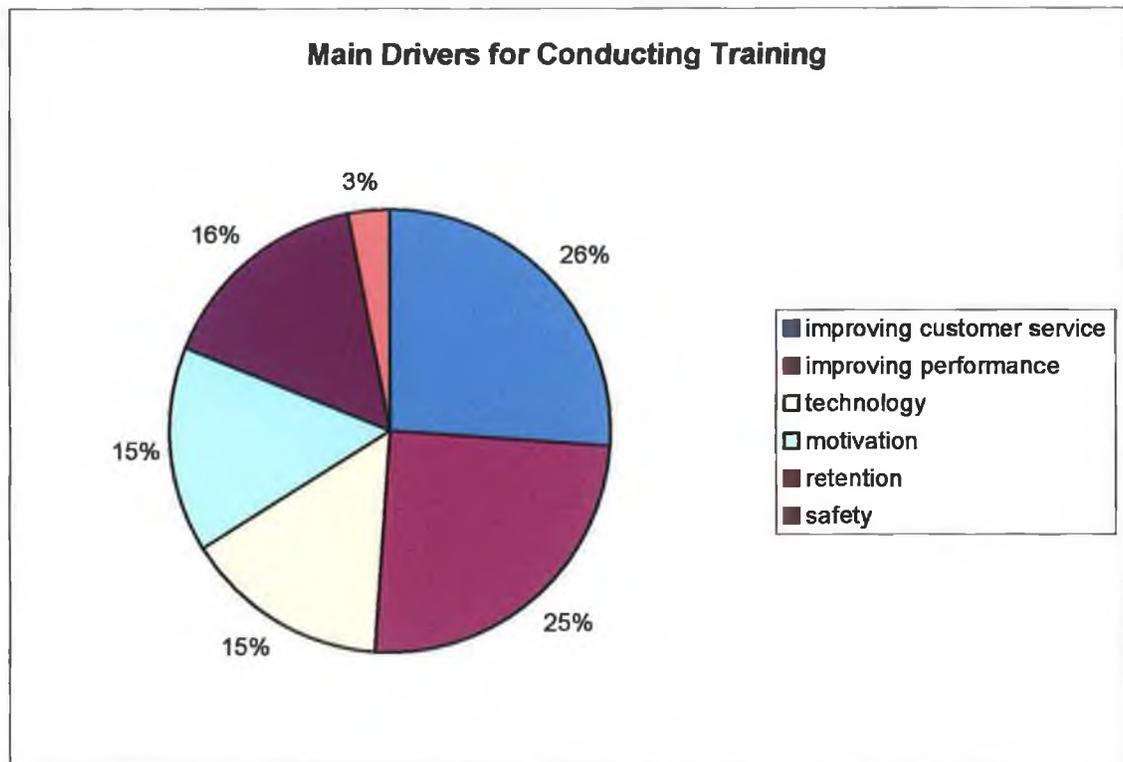


Figure 4.5: What are the main drivers for conducting training?

Figure 4.5 shows, twenty per cent (26%) of respondents felt that improving customer service is the top driver, this was closely followed by improving performance at twenty five per cent (25%). Fifteen per cent (15%) of respondents felt technology change was a driver, while motivation accounted for fifteen per cent (15%) of the respondents. Sixteen per cent (16%) of respondents revealed that retention was the main drivers for training and only three per cent (3%) of respondents revealing that health and safety was the main driver.

When the respondents were asked do they think training is relevant the research revealed the following (see figure 4.6).

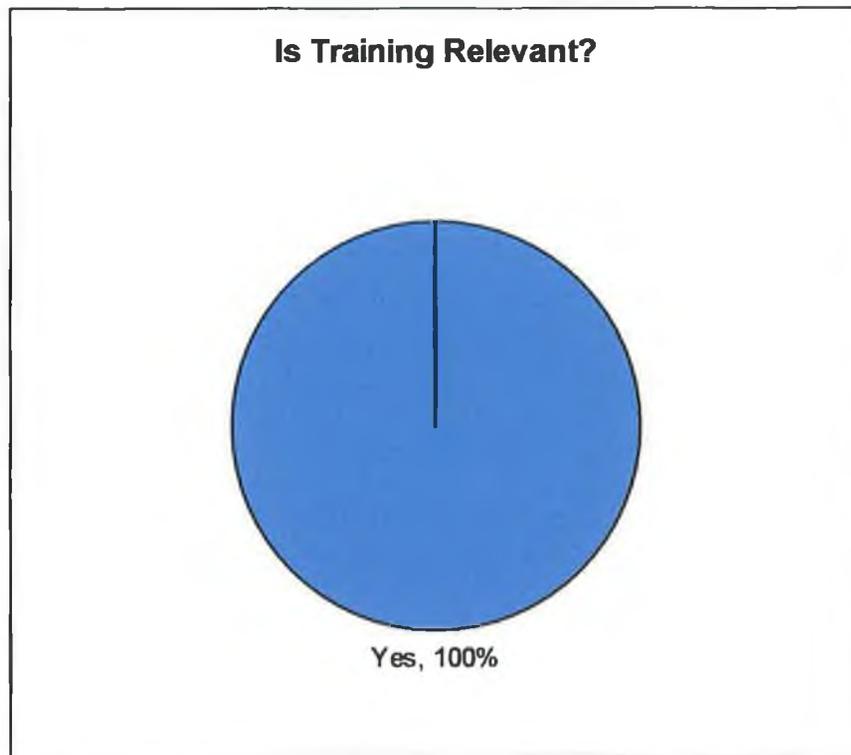


Figure 4.6: The relevance of training.

As figure 4.6 shows, a massive one hundred per cent (100%) of respondents feel that training is relevant for all the reasons mentioned in figure 4.5.

When the respondents were asked about the existence of an induction process, the research found the following (see figure 4.7).

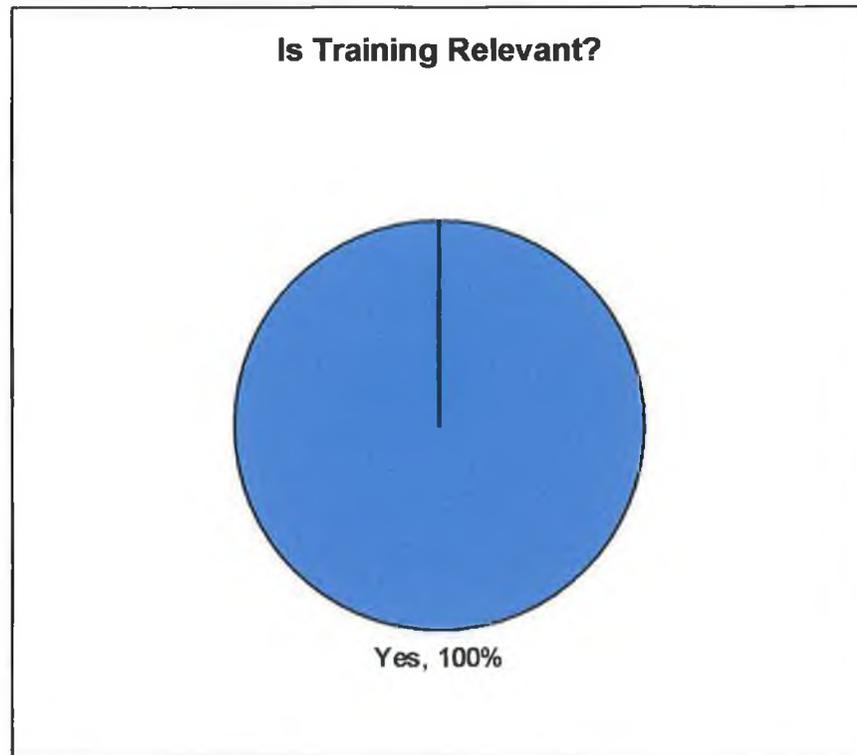


Figure 4.7: Do you conduct an induction process?

As figure 4.7 shows, one hundred per cent (100%) of respondents use the induction process, but it is used for different reasons (see figure 4.8).

When the respondents were asked as to the reasons for conducting an induction programme, the findings revealed the following (see figure 4.8)

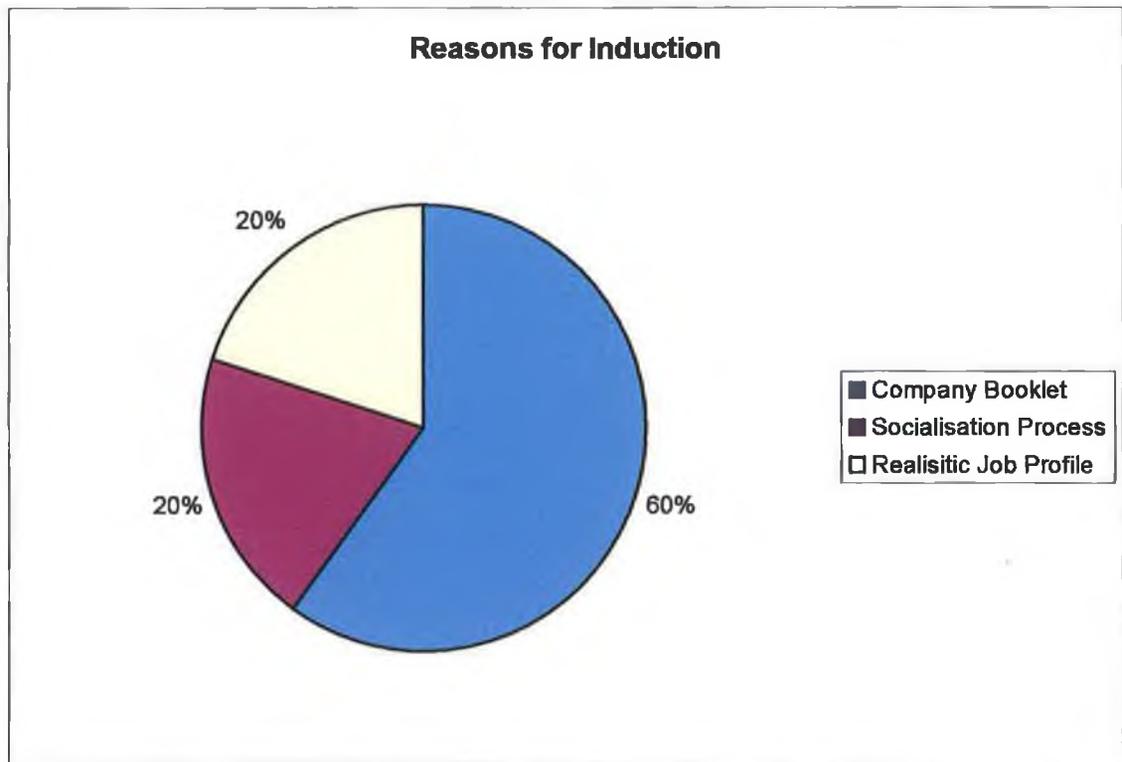


Figure 4.8: What are the reasons for carrying out an induction process?

As figure 4.8 shows, out of the one hundred per cent (100%) of respondents who use the induction process, sixty per cent (60%) of respondents use the company booklet as the induction process, twenty per cent (20%) of respondents use induction as a socialisation technique, twenty per cent (20%) of respondents use it as a means of offering a realistic job profile.

4.2 Pre Training Requisite

The second area of the primary findings are confined to pre training requisite area.

Respondents were asked which they considered to be the most important pre requisite for training. The results showed the following (see figure 4.9).

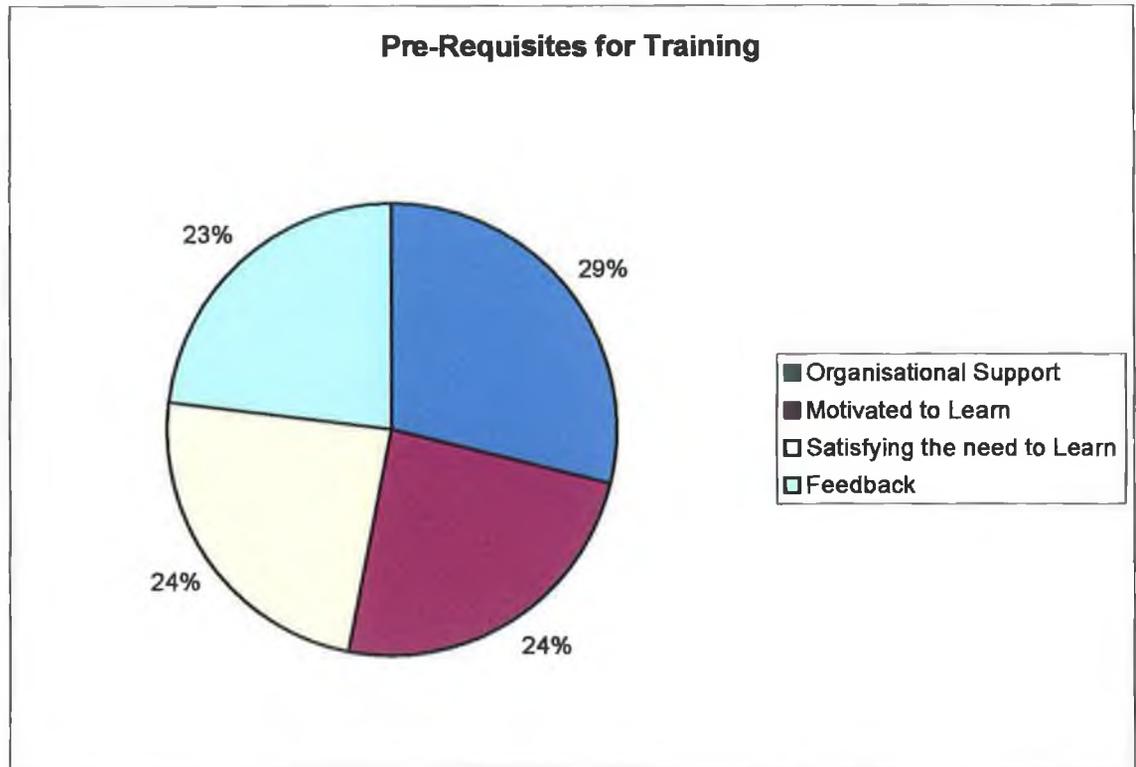


Figure 4.9: Which areas of the pre training requisite do you consider important?

Figure 4.9 shows, twenty nine per cent (29%) of respondents believe that organisational support is the most important, followed closely by learner motivated to learn and satisfying the need of the learner both on twenty four per cent (24%) and finally the respondent viewed feedback as the least important at twenty three per cent (23%).

4.3 Training needs analysis

When the respondents were asked do they conduct a training needs analysis, the findings revealed the following (see figure 4.10).

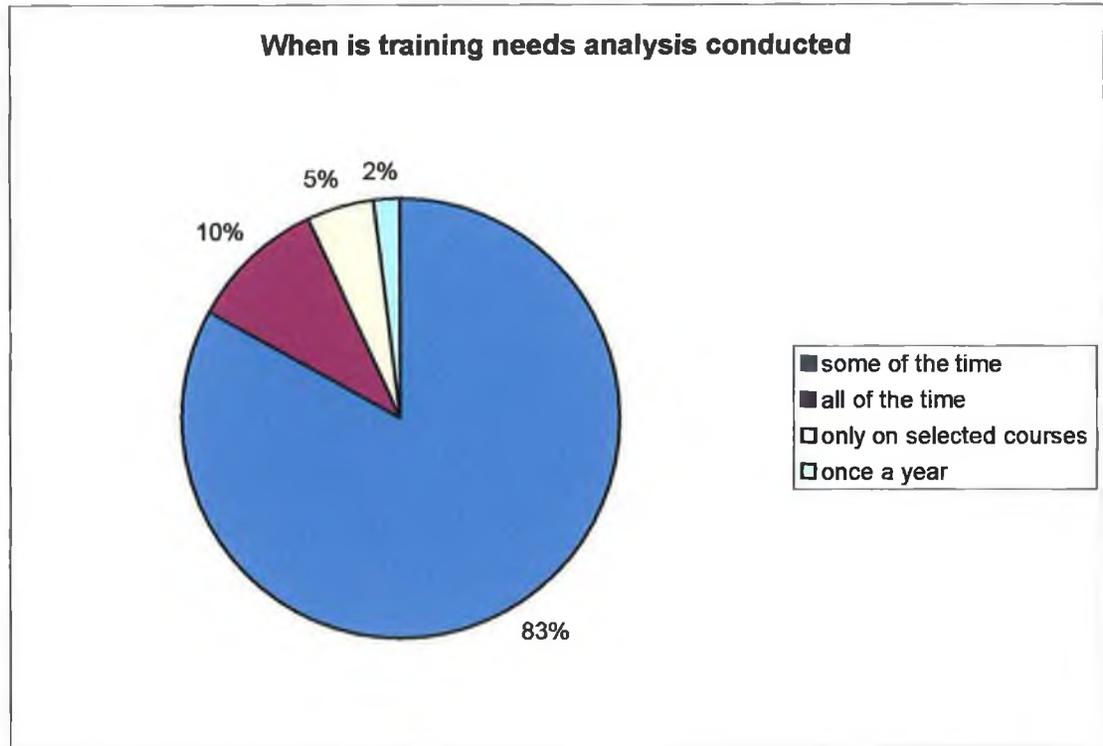


Figure 4.10: Do you conduct a training needs analysis?

As figure 4.10 shows, eighty three per cent (83%) of respondents conduct a training needs analysis some of the time, ten per cent (10%) of respondents conduct an analysis all of the time, with five per cent (5%) conducting the analysis only on selected courses and finally two per cent (2%) of respondents conduct the analysis once a year.

When the respondents were asked as to how they conduct a training needs analysis the findings showed the following (see figure 4.11).

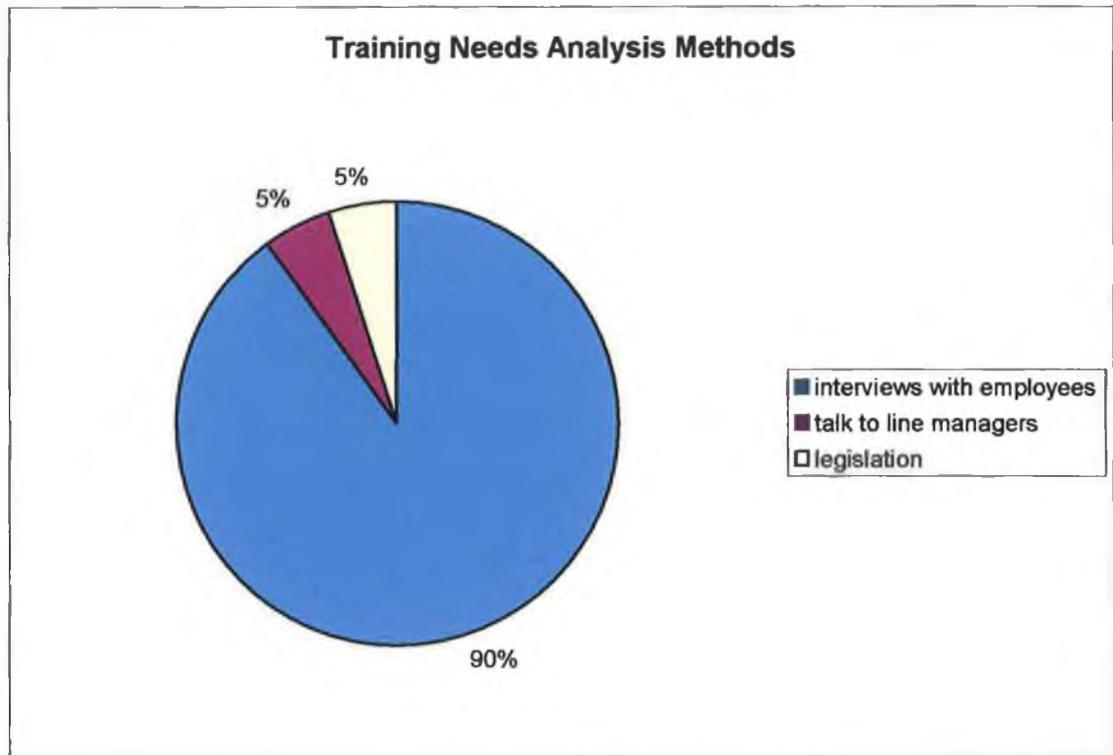


Figure 4.11: How do you conduct a training needs analysis?

As figure 4.11 shows, ninety per cent (90%) of respondents conduct interviews with employees and immediate managers as a method to see what training is needed, five per cent (5%) of respondents talk to immediate line managers and finally five per cent (5%) of respondents stating that training depending on legislation.

When the respondents were asked about training needs analysis at organisational level, the findings revealed the following (see figure 4.12).



Figure 4.12: When conducting a training needs analysis at organisational level, what do you consider?

As figure 4.12 shows, fifty per cent (50%) of respondents look at the objectives of the organisation and what is needed to achieve these objectives, twenty per cent (20%) of respondents conduct interviews with supervisors and managers, ten per cent (10%) of respondents look at the performance of the company, ten per cent (10%) of respondents look at the objectives of the organisation and see if the company has the ability to train in these areas and six per cent (6%) of respondents get external consultants in to do the analysis and finally four per cent (4%) of respondents had zero response.

When the respondents were asked about the training needs analysis at job level, the findings revealed the following (see figure 4.13)

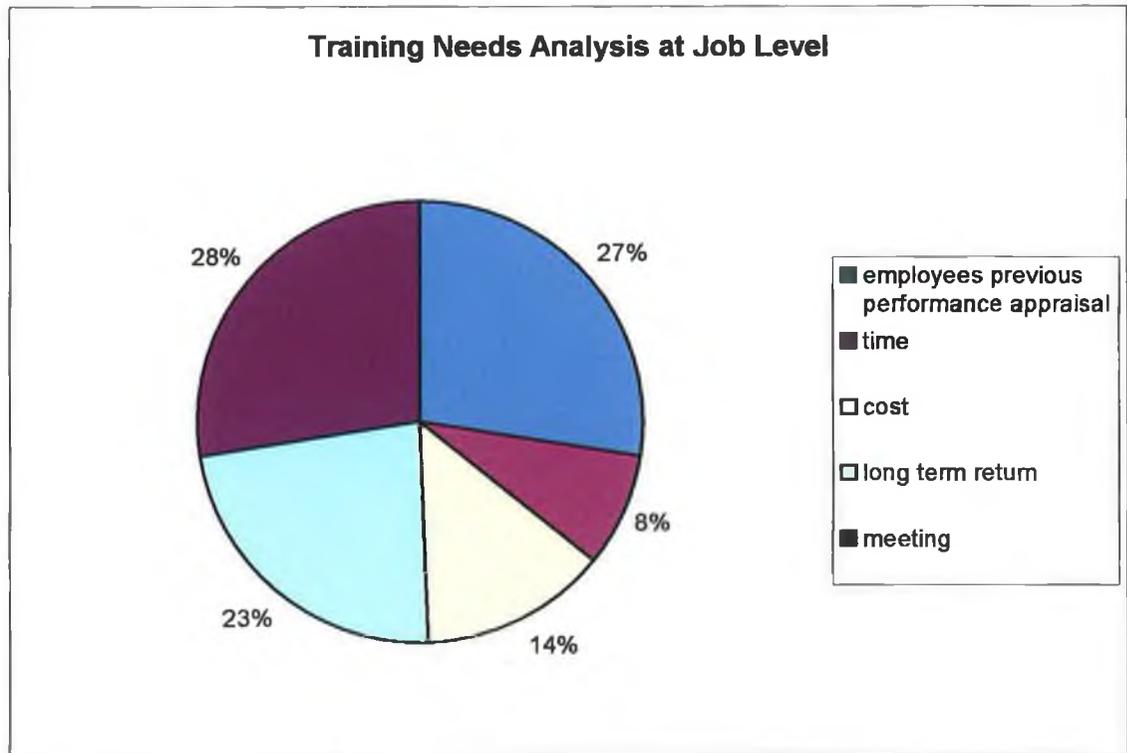


Figure 4.13: When conducting a training needs analysis at job level, what areas do you consider?

As figure 4.13 shows, twenty seven per cent (27%) of respondents consider the employees previous performance appraisal, eight per cent (8%) consider the time involved in the training, fourteen per cent (14%) of respondents consider the cost involved, twenty three per cent (23%) consider the long term return on investment and finally twenty eight per cent (28%) have a meeting with the employee.

When asked about the training needs analysis at the individual level, the findings revealed the following (see figure 4.14).

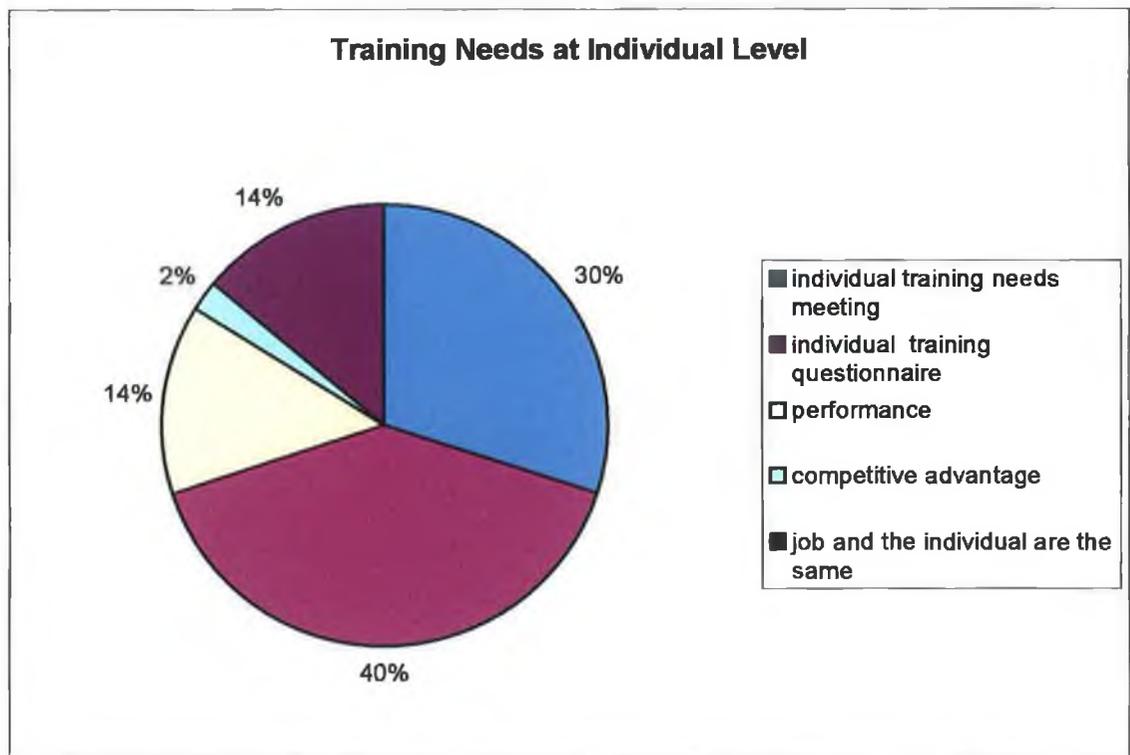


Figure 4.14: When conducting a training needs analysis at the individual level, what areas do you consider?

Figure 4.14 shows that thirty per cent (30%) of respondents conduct an individual training needs meeting, forty per cent (40%) use the individual training questionnaire, fourteen per cent (14%) of respondents look at the performance of the individual, two per cent (2%) of respondents look at what competitive advantage can be gained from this employee and finally fourteen per cent (14%) of respondents feel the job and the individual are the same thing.

4.4 Design and Implementation

When the respondents were asked about the usage of on the job training methods, the results were as follows (see figure 4.15).

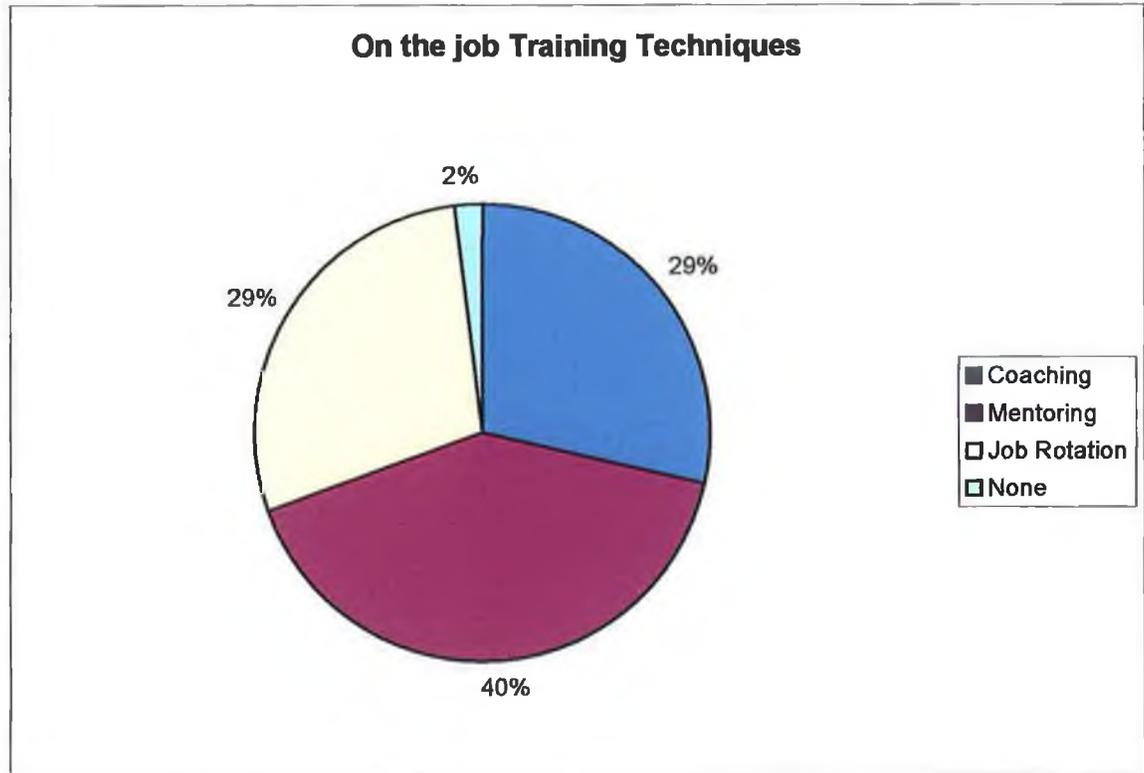


Figure 4.15: The usage of on the job training techniques?

As the above figure 4.15 shows, twenty nine per cent (29%) of respondents have used the coaching technique, forty per cent (40%) of respondents have use the mentoring technique, twenty nine per cent (29%) of respondents have used job rotation, while only two per cent (2%)of respondents have never used any of these techniques. Of the respondents that have used the above-mentioned techniques, sixty per cent (60%) feel that coaching is the most effective.

When the area of off the job training was discussed the following results were revealed (see figure 4.16).

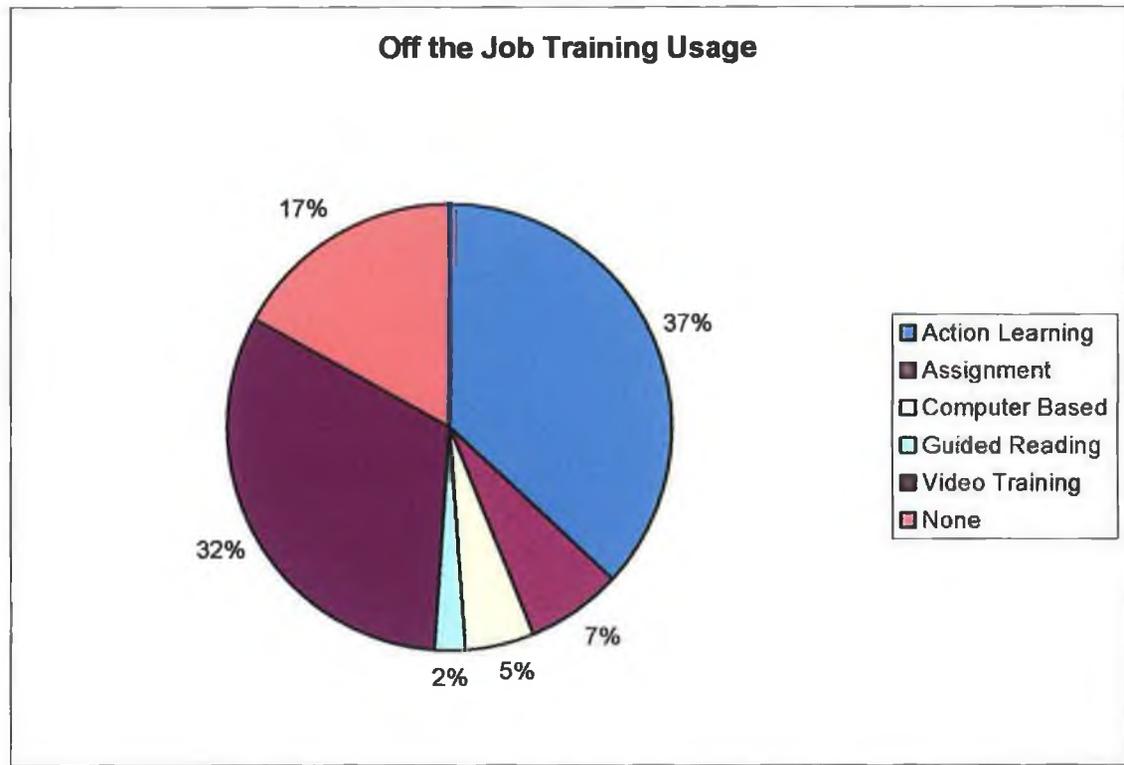


Figure 4.16: The usage of off the job training techniques?

As figure 4.16 shows, thirty seven per cent (37%) of respondents have used action learning, five per cent (5%) of respondents have used computer based training, seven per cent (7%) of respondents have used assignment based training, two per cent (2%) of the respondents have used guided reading, 32 per cent have used the video training technique and finally seventeen per cent (17%) have used none of the training techniques mentioned. Out of the ninety three per cent (93%) of respondents who have used the above mentioned techniques in figure 4.15, fifty per cent (50%) feel that action learning has been the most effective, while twenty five per cent (25%) feel that computer based training is the most effective, while video training rates as the least effective with only two per cent (2%) of respondents suggesting that it is the most effective.

When the areas of off the job training methods were explored the following results were revealed (see figure 4.17).

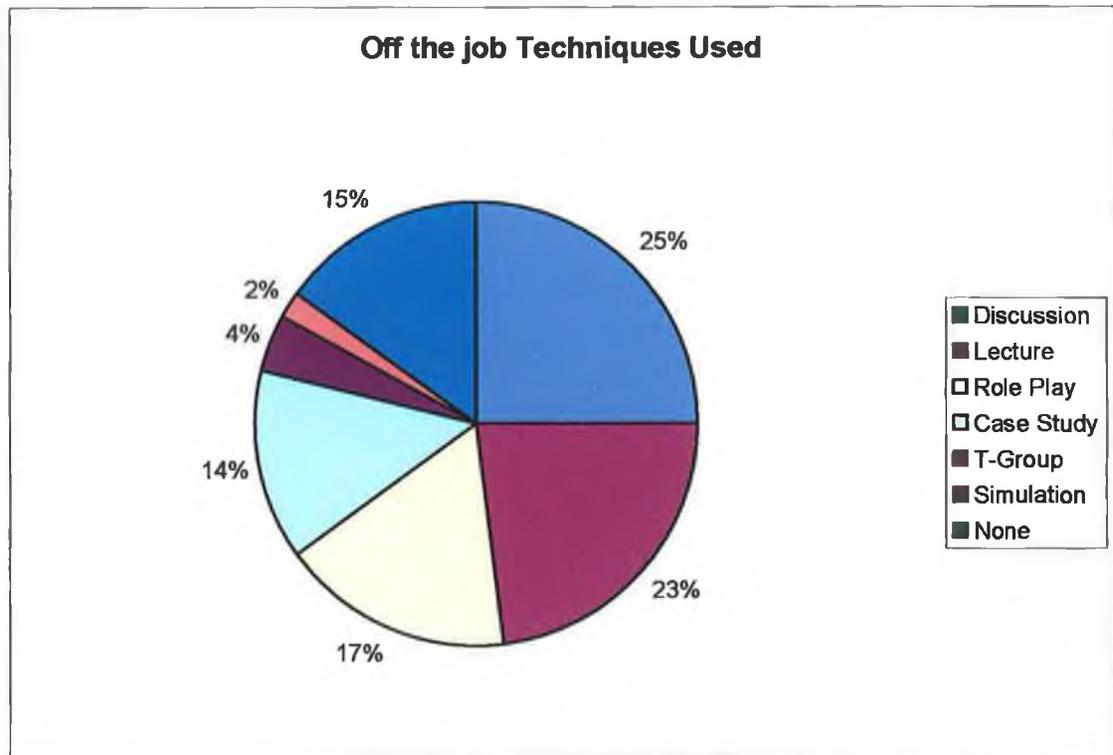


Figure 4.17: The usage of off the job training techniques?

As figure 4.17 shows the discussion technique seems to be the most popular off the job training technique with twenty five per cent (25%) of respondents using this, twenty three per cent (23%) of respondents use the lecture technique, seventeen per cent (17%) of the respondents use the role play technique. The results also showed that fourteen per cent (14%) of respondents use the case study technique, while four per cent (4%) of respondents use T-Group training, two per cent (2%) only use simulation and a massive fifteen per cent (15%) use none of the techniques mentioned in figure 4.17.

When the respondents were asked as to how objectives for training are set, the findings revealed the following(see figure 4.18).

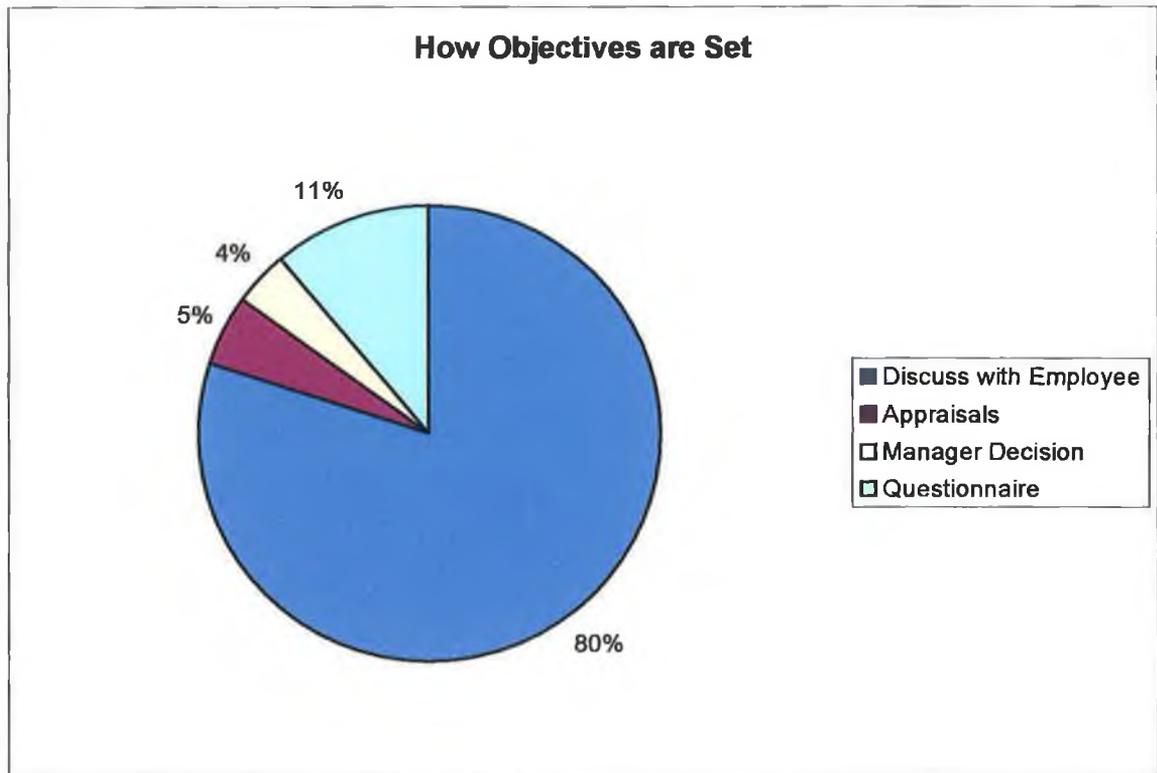


Figure 4.18: How do you set objectives for training?

As figure 4.18 shows, eighty per cent (80%) of respondents discuss with the employee what is needed, five per cent (5%) of respondents use appraisals to set the objectives, four per cent (4%) leave the decision to managers and finally eleven per cent (11%) of respondents use employee questionnaire to drive the training objectives.

4.5 Evaluation

When the respondents were asked about evaluation, the findings revealed the following (see figure 4.19).

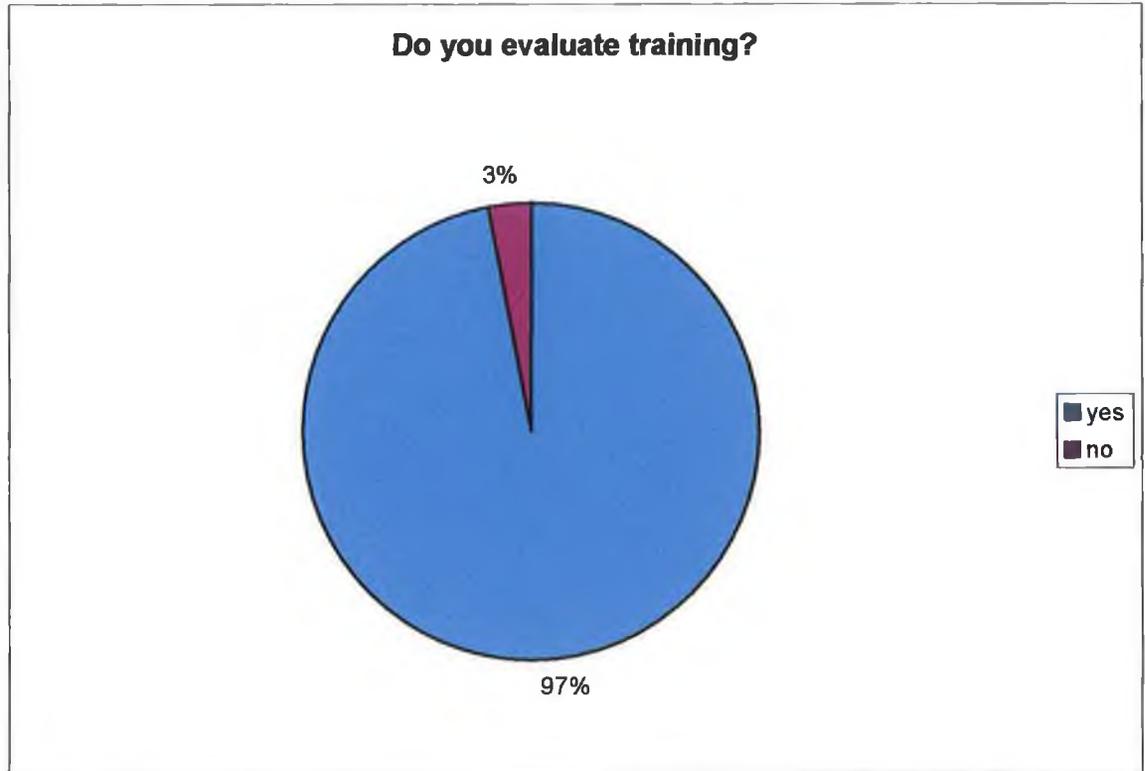


Figure 4.19: Do you evaluate training?

As figure 4.19 shows ninety seven per cent (97%) of respondents evaluate training and three per cent (3%) do not.

When asked as to how often the respondents evaluate there was a varied response (see figure 4.20).

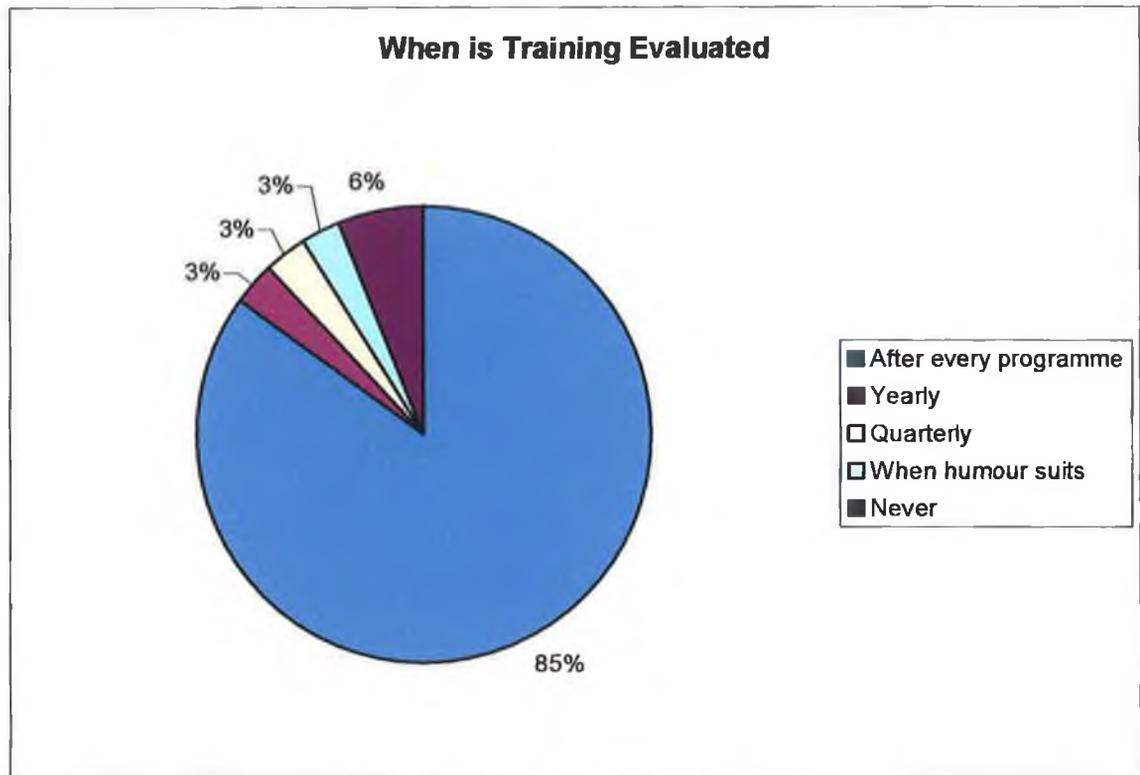


Figure 4.20: How often do you evaluate?

As figure 4.20 shows, a massive eighty five per cent (85%) of respondents evaluate after every training programme, three per cent (3%) evaluate yearly, three per cent (3%) evaluate quarterly, three per cent (3%) evaluate whenever the humour suits them and six per cent (6%) never evaluate.

When the ninety four per cent (94%) of respondents who evaluate were asked as to why they evaluate the findings showed the following (see figure 4.21).

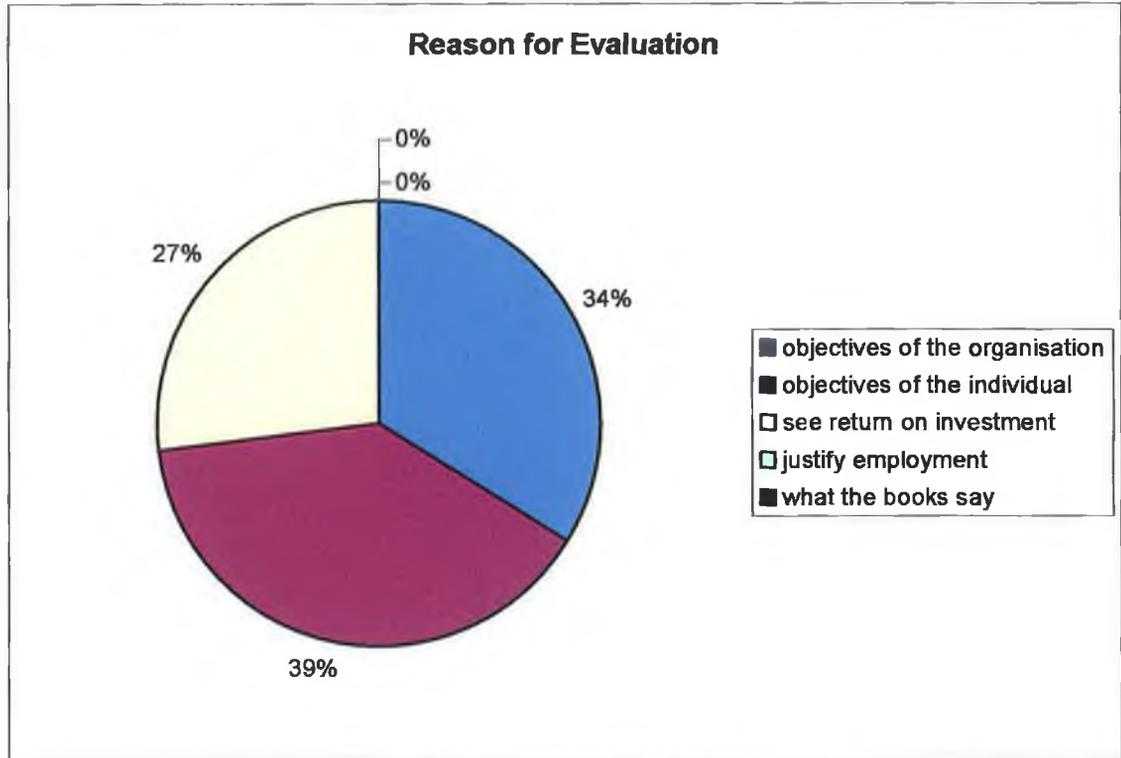


Figure 4.21: Why do you evaluate?

Figure 4.21 shows the following, thirty four per cent (34%) of respondents evaluate to see if the programme meets the objectives of the organisation, thirty nine per cent (39%) evaluate to see if the programme meets the objectives of the individual and finally twenty seven per cent (27%) evaluate to see return on investment. Zero per cent of respondents evaluated, just to justify employment and do it because the literature suggests it.

The ninety four per cent (94%) of respondents who evaluate were further asked as to what mediums they use to evaluate and the findings showed the following (see figure 4.22).

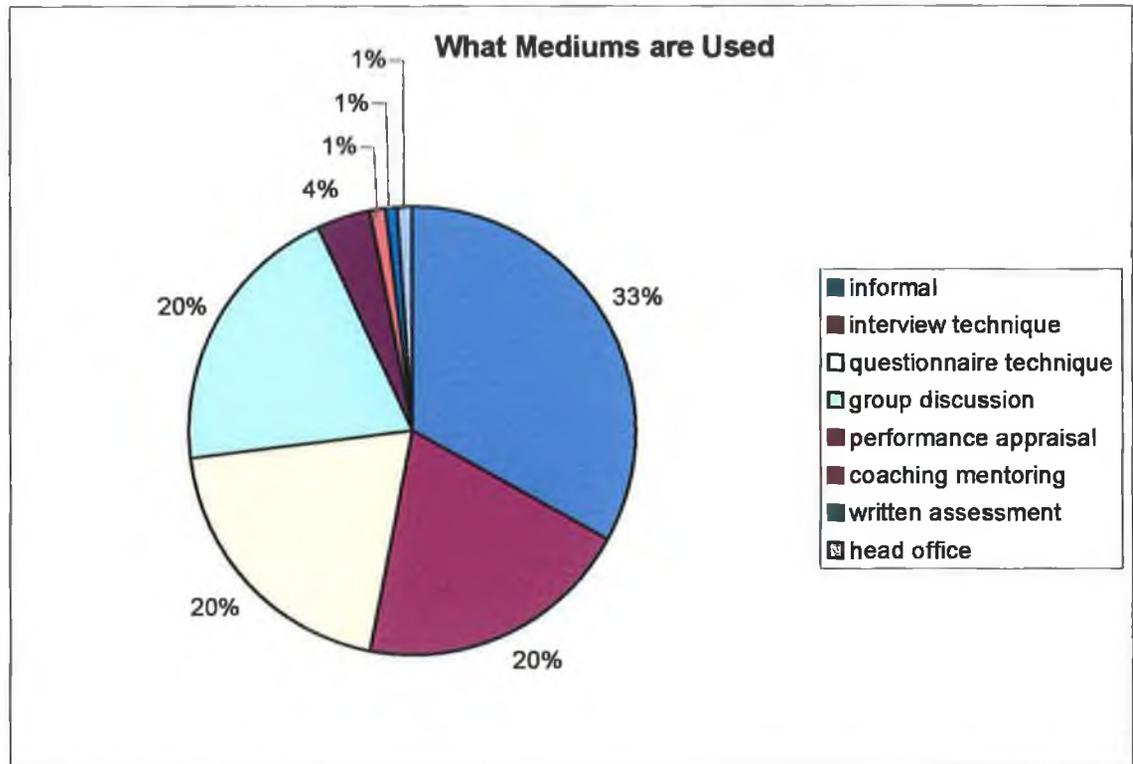


Figure 4.22: What mediums are used in training?

As figure 4.22 show, thirty three per cent (33%) of respondents use the informal medium, twenty per cent (20%) of respondents use the interview technique and twenty per cent (20%) use the questionnaire technique. Twenty per cent (20%) of respondents use the group discussion technique, four per cent (4%)of respondents use the performance appraisal technique. Coaching mentoring, written assessment and head office all rated very low on one per cent (1%) each of respondents choices.

When the six per cent (6%) of respondents who do not evaluate, were asked as to the reasons why they do not evaluate, the findings showed the following (see figure 4.23).

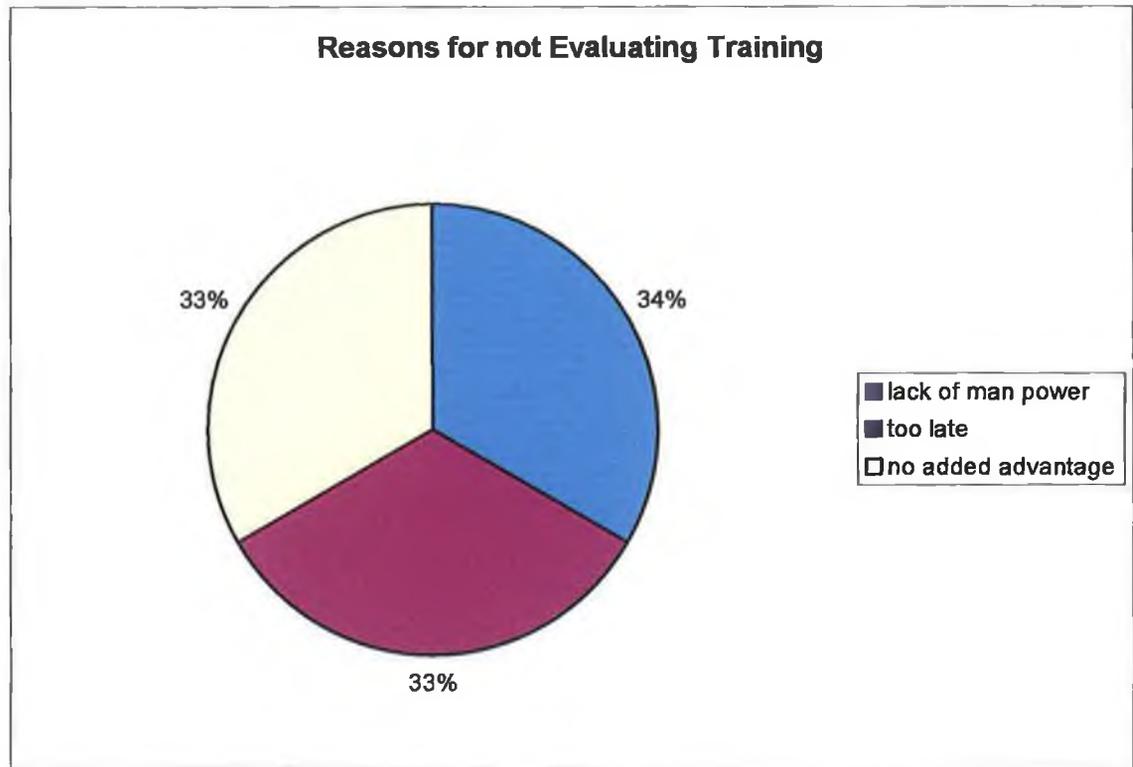


Figure 4.23: Why do you not evaluate training?

As the above figure 4.23 show, thirty four per cent (34%) of respondents suggest that lack of man power is one reason for not evaluating, thirty three per cent (33%) of respondents suggest that the training is over it is too late and thirty three per cent (33%) of respondents feel evaluation is of no added advantage and finally one per cent failed to respond.

When the respondents were asked, if they had ever heard of Kirkpatrick's model of evaluation the findings showed the following (see figure 4.24).

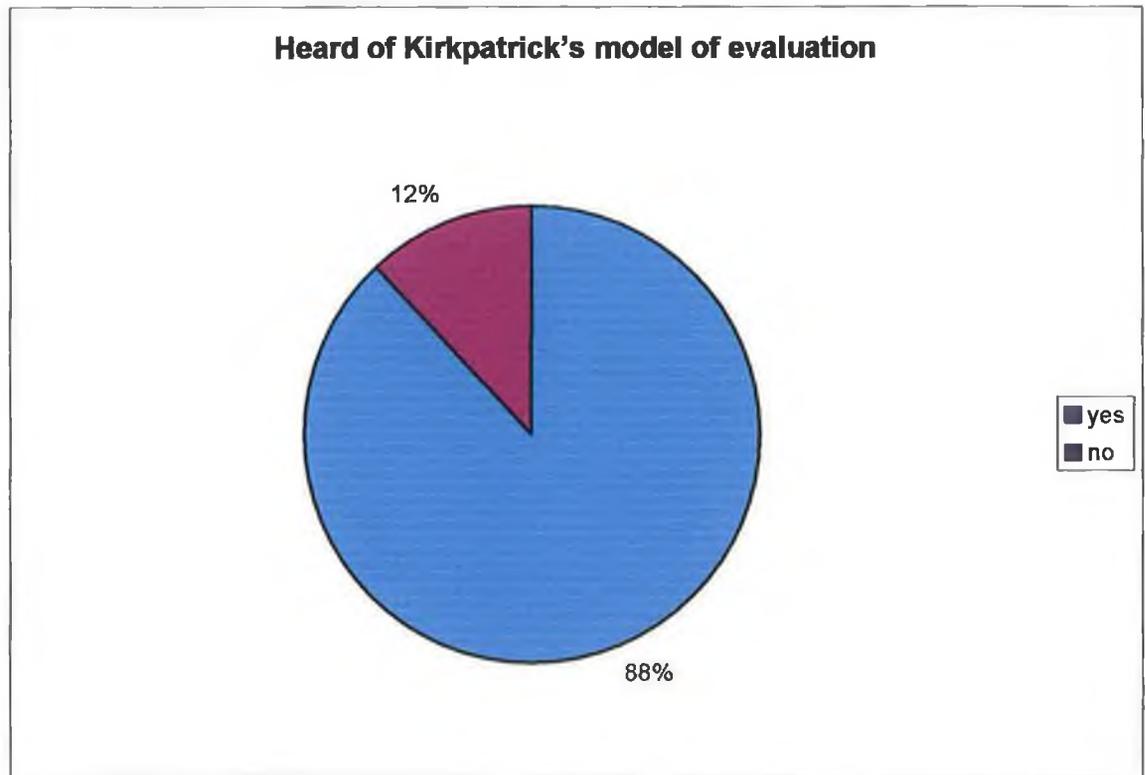


Figure 4.24: Have you ever heard of Kirkpatrick's model of evaluation?

As figure 4.24 shows, eighty eight per cent (88%) of respondents have never heard of Kirkpatrick's model, while twelve per cent (12%) have heard of Kirkpatrick's model.

When the respondents were asked as to what are the major barriers/problems in the training area in SME's the findings revealed the following. It must be noted that the author restricted the respondents to six key areas as to get quality more than quantity responses (see figure 4.25).

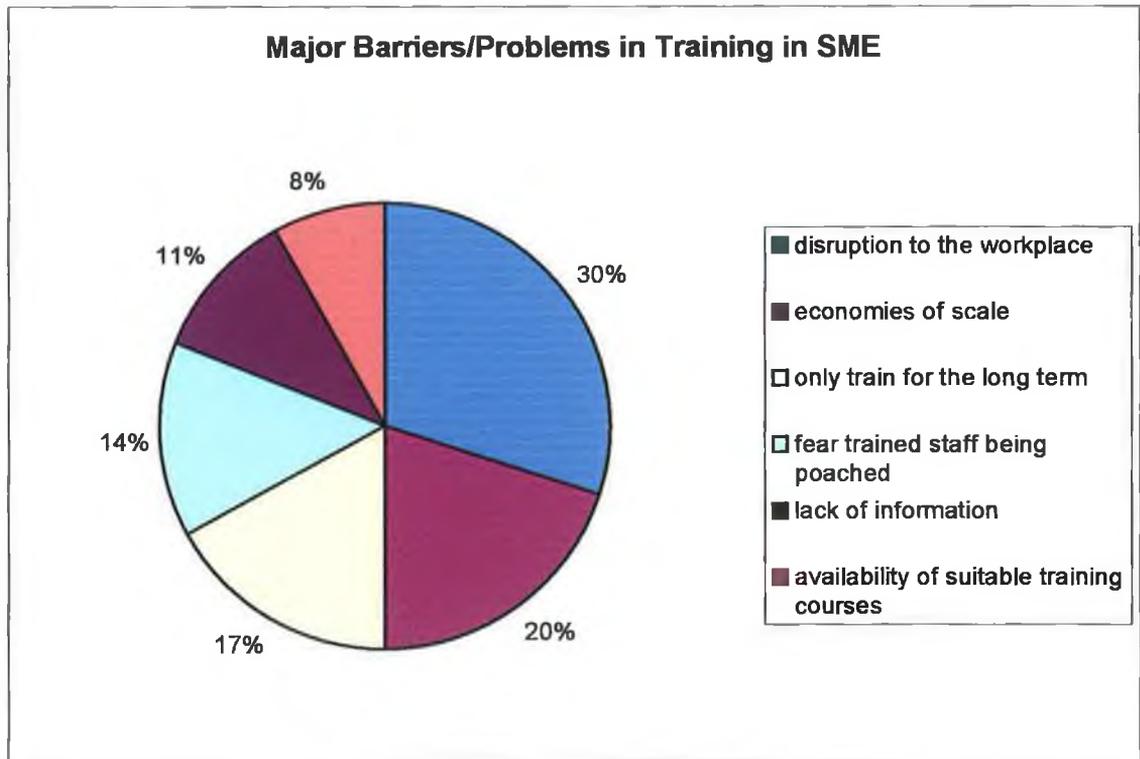


Figure 4.25: What are the major barrier /problems in training in SME?

Figure 4.25 shows, thirty per cent (30%) of respondents felt that disruption to the workplace was a major barrier to training, twenty per cent (20%) of respondents found economies of scale as a major problem, seventeen per cent (17%) of respondents suggest that they only train for the long term, where as fourteen per cent (14%) of respondents fear trained staff being poached. Eleven per cent (11%) of respondents suggest that a lack of information regarding training as a major barrier to training and finally eight per cent found that the availability of suitable training courses was a barrier to training.

When the respondents were asked an open question as to what they feel are the advantages of training the findings revealed the following (see figure 4.26)

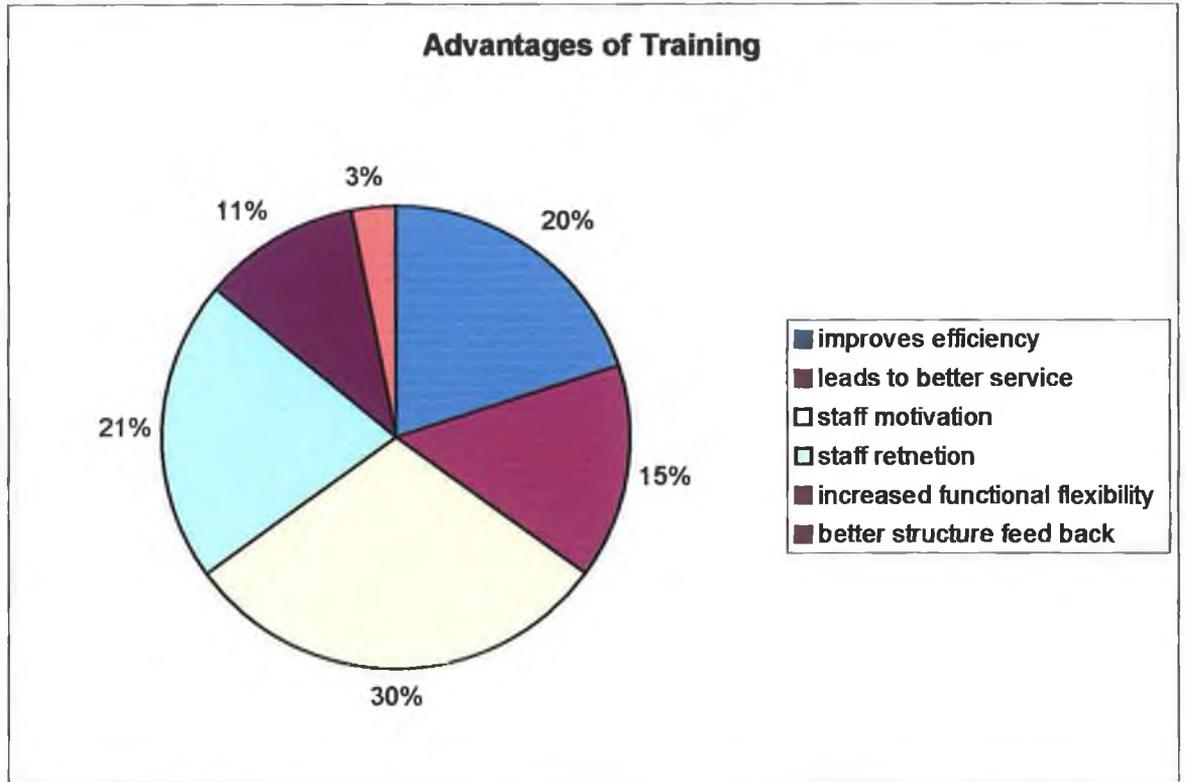


Figure 4.26: What advantages does training bring to the organisation?

Figure 4.26 shows that the top six answers as, twenty per cent (20%) of respondents found it improves efficiency, fifteen per cent (15%) found it leads to better service, thirty per cent (30%) of respondents found it leads to better staff motivation, twenty one per cent (21%) found it leads to better staff retention, eleven per cent (11%) found it leads to better increased functional flexibility and three percent (3%) found it leads to better structure feed back.

Finally the respondents were again asked an open ended question as to how training could be conducted in SME's, the findings revealed the following (see figure 4.27).

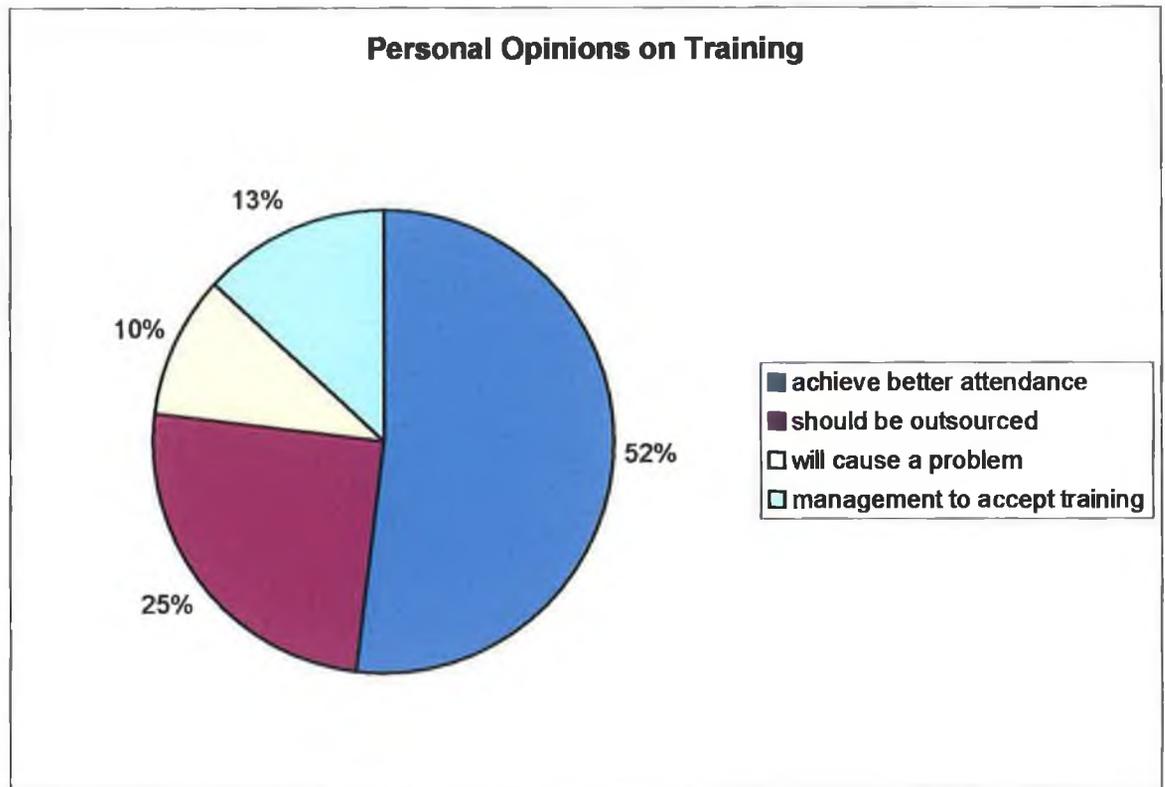


Figure 4.27: What is your personal opinion on how training should be conducted in SME's?

Figure 4.27 shows that fifty two per cent (52%) of respondents feel that training needs to be conducted during working hours so as to achieve better attendance, twenty five per cent (25%) of respondents believe that training should be completely outsourced, ten per cent (10%) believe that training will always cause a problem in relation to manpower and has to be managed, thirteen per cent (13%) believe that management have to accept training in necessary and look at the bottom line not costs.

Chapter 5

5.1 Description of topic covered in the research

The subject that this thesis is covering, is the existence of training in a selection of the SME's in the South – East of Ireland. The research has covered the following main areas. Pre training requisite, which necessitates looking at what and how people do before the commencement of a training course. The research then proceeded to explore the whole area of training needs analysis. The next step in the research was to explore the design and implementation of training and how it was conducted. The final area looked at is another crucial part of training that area being the evaluation stage and what it can bring to a training course.

5.2 General

The findings showed that the seventy per cent (70%) of respondents were from the small sector of the SME sector, with fifteen per cent (15%) from the medium sector and fifteen per cent (15%) from the micro sector, which gives a good distribution of companies and a wide variety of answers.

IBEC (2002, p.55) found that training forms an important role in organisations achieving their goals and objectives, yet five per cent (5%) of respondents did not know who was in charge of training. It must be borne in mind that even though five per cent seems very low, all the respondents were either managers or owners, which may reflect the attitude found by Viten, Lane and Hayes (1997, p.16) that a lot of owners or managers find training irrelevant and unnecessary. The findings also show that seventy two per cent (72%) of respondents have some body dedicated to training, which seems to back up McGinty (2005, p.1), that employers are now spending more on training than before.

Reid and Harris (2004, p.444) found that SME's view training as a financial drain, yet according to IBEC (2002, p.57) firms employing less than fifty (50) employees spend an average of three per cent (3%) of payroll on training which seems to be reinforced by the research where sixty five per cent (65%) of respondents spend between 2.1- 3 per cent of payroll on training.

The findings show a major disparity between what IBEC (2002, p.56) found that the average length of training is between three (3) and five (5) days, whereas the findings found that seventy two per cent (72%) of the respondents average training course lasts between one (1) to three (3) days, with only twelve per cent (12%) of the respondents agreeing with this statement.

In relation to the drivers for conducting training, the results of the research concur with some of McGinty (2005, p.1) that the top three drivers for training are improving customer service at twenty six per cent (26%) of respondents, managing performance at twenty five per cent (25%) of respondents but disagree with the area of health and safety with only three per cent (3%) of respondents saying this was a driver for training, with less emphasis on technology with only fifteen per cent (15%) of respondents stating that technology was a driver for training.

The findings show that one hundred per cent (100%) of respondents view that training is relevant which completely disagrees with Viten, Lane and Hayes (1997, p.16) where they found that a lot of managers/owners find training irrelevant and unnecessary.

The findings revealed that all respondents use induction as a means of training which reinforces Scarborough and Zimmerer (1996, p.776) view that induction is an effective form of training. The research found that while induction is used by all respondents it is used in three different manners, sixty per cent (60%) of respondents use it as just training, where twenty per cent (20%) use it as a mean of socialisation and twenty per cent (20%) use it as a means of reinforcing the selection stage by offering a realistic job profile.

5.3 Pre training Requisite

The results of the research findings have shown that twenty three per cent (23%) of respondents rate feedback as the least important aspect of the pre training requisite which is the opposite of what Kirkpatrick (1994) suggest that evaluation and feed back are crucial to effective training, with twenty nine per cent (29%) of respondents stating that organisational support is the most important pre training requisite.

5.4 Training Needs Analysis

All of the respondents indicated that they conduct a training needs analysis which further support Armstrong (2001, p.227), and IBEC (2004, p.8) who suggest that a training needs analysis is essential to a successful training programme, but only ten per cent (10%) conducting a training needs analysis all of the time and a massive eighty three per cent of respondents conducting a training needs analysis only some of the time

Gunnigle, Heraty & Morley (1997, p.181) suggest that a training needs analysis is all about identifying the skills gap, a point that is supported by the respondents where ninety per cent (90%) of the respondents identify the gap in skills by conducting interviews with the employee and immediate manager and five per cent (5%) talk to the line manager. The research findings also reinforced one of Robbins 1978 (cited in IBEC 2004, p.9) main requirements for a training needs analysis that being what is needed from the employee to do their job properly and what deficiencies does the employee have.

Gunnigle, Heraty & Morley (1997, p.182) suggest that one of the main training needs at organisational level is that you look at the company and see if it has the ability to train, but the findings revealed that only ten per cent (10%) of respondents do this. On the other hand a significant majority of fifty per cent (50%) of respondents do look at what the organisations objectives are which reinforces Arthur (1995, p.247) who suggests that the organisation needs to look at the objectives of the firm both in the long and short term.

Armstrong (2001, p.552) suggests that a job level training needs analysis needs to consider performance appraisals/reviews. The findings suggest that only twenty seven per cent (27%) of respondents agree with this, but none of the respondents agree with IBEC (2004, P.9) that job level training needs analysis consists of a meeting with the immediate manager.

The evidence based on the findings seem to suggest that the respondents seem to agree with what the literature is saying about the individual training needs analysis. IBEC

(2004,P.10) found that questionnaires are very effective in eliciting information, a point that is supported by the findings with forty per cent (40%) of respondents agreeing with this suggestion. The evidence of the research also supports what Arthur (1995, p.247) suggest that training has to be designed around the individual needs, with thirty per cent (30%) of respondents agreeing with this suggestion. The research findings have found one significant area of disagreement with the literature, this area of disagreement is that fourteen per cent (14%) of respondents seem to feel the job and individual level training needs analysis are the same.

5.5 Design and Implementation

The evidence from the research shows that coaching, mentoring and job rotation are favourite on the job techniques of the respondents. The findings suggest that mentoring is the most popular technique used in training, with forty per cent (40%) of respondents stating this fact. Coaching and job rotation both follow on with twenty nine per cent (29%) of respondents stating this is the next most popular medium. All of the findings from this research suggest that the respondents agree with the literature of Armstrong (2001,pp.892-3), and Stredwick (2002, p.118). Only two per cent (2%) of respondents disagree with Armstrong (2002, p.892-3), and Stredwick (2002, p.118).

The findings concur with the off the job training techniques suggested by Armstrong (2001, p.893-894) of action learning, assignment, job instruction, computer based training, with eighty three per cent (83%) of respondents using some if not all of the mentioned techniques. The most popular technique is the action learning, with thirty seven per cent (37%) of respondents using this technique. The least popular was the guided training technique with only two per cent (2%) of respondents using this technique. Thirty two per cent (32%) of respondents use the video training technique, but this proved to be the least effective of all the mentioned techniques. The findings have also revealed that seventeen per cent (17%) of respondents disagree with training techniques mentioned above and have never used any of the mentioned techniques.

Overall the findings revealed that eighty five per cent (85%) of respondents have used the techniques suggested by Armstrong (2001, pp.899-906), those techniques being discussion, lecture, role play, case study, T-Group and simulation. The most popular

being the discussion technique with twenty five per cent (25%) of respondents using this technique and the least popular being the simulation technique with only two per cent (2%) of respondents using this technique. Quite surprisingly the research results showed that fifteen per cent (15%) deviate from mediums mentioned by Armstrong (2001, pp.899-906).

5.6 Evaluation

Armstrong (2001, p.57) found evaluation is considered to be a very important part of the training agenda, yet the finding showed that only ninety seven per cent (97%) of respondents evaluate training. This finding is far less than what Morley, Gunnigle and Turner (1999/2000) found, where eleven per cent (11%) of respondents never evaluate training courses.

Considering the importance of evaluation, the research findings have revealed that only eighty five per cent (85%) of the ninety seven per cent (97%) of respondents who evaluate, conduct evaluation all of the time, but this is a huge increase from what Morley, Gunnigle and Turner (1999/2000) found, that only thirteen per cent (13%) of respondents evaluate all of the time. While Morley, Gunnigle and Turner (1999/2000) found that forty two per cent (42%) of respondents evaluate sometimes, the authors research findings showed a significant difference where only nine per cent (9%) evaluating sometimes.

The findings did not vary very much when reasons were asked as to why the respondents evaluate. Thirty four per cent (34%) of respondents conducting evaluation to identify if training meets the objects of the organisation, thirty nine per cent (39%) conducting evaluation to identify if training meets the needs of the individual and thirty three per cent (33%) conducting evaluation to see return on investment, which seems to agree with Gunnigle, Heraty and Morley (2002, p.232) that an evaluation's main aim is to assess the overall impact of the training programme.

Even though seventy two per cent (72%) of respondents use the coaching and mentoring technique, both these techniques rated very poorly as a means of evaluation, both were used by only one per cent (1%) of respondents.

Viten, Lane & Hayes (1997, pp 10-16) found that managers/owners find training, unnecessary, and neglect of the HRM function, while Reid and Harris (2004, p.4) found that training is costly. These findings are totally reinforced by the authors findings where there is an even split between all three points mentioned.

While the research shows that ninety seven per cent (97%) of respondents conduct evaluation only eighty seven per cent (87%) have ever heard of Kirkpatrick's evaluation model.

While there are major barrier to training in the SME sector the findings do contradict what some of the literature is suggesting. The findings show that only fourteen per cent (14%) of the respondents of the respondents feel that staff being poached is a problem which contradicts what Matlay (2002, p.365) found which is that staff being poached was a major problem in relation to training. The findings do concur with that of IBEC (2000, p.3) where both findings have found that training causes disruption to the workplace, thirty per cent (30%) of respondents found this a major problem. The findings have also revealed that seventeen per cent (17%) of the respondents train only for the long term while reinforces Reid and Harris (2004, p.444) who found that in SME's training is only conducted on those employees who are willing to stay in employment in a long-term capacity. The findings have shown that eight per cent (8%) of respondents seem to have some problem with access to suitable training or information regarding training which concur with Viten, Lane and Hayes (1997, p.7) who found that succession planning was absent.

IBEC (2002, p.55) suggest that training is advantageous to any organisation to achieve its objectives. The research findings do support this point because twenty per cent (20%) of the respondents feel that training improves efficiency, a point that is supported by IBEC (2004, p.21). The results also showed that thirty per cent (30%) of the respondents feel it leads to better motivation and confidence in the workplace, a point that is concurred with by Devins, Johnson and Sutherland (2004, p.453). IBEC

(2004, p. 21) found that training increases functional flexibility, this point is further supported by the findings where eleven per cent (11%) of the respondents agree with this statement. Two points (2) that were omitted from the literature review but revealed in the findings as important advantages to the respondents were, fifteen per cent (15%) of respondents felt it lead to better customer service and three per cent (3%) felt it lead to more effective and structure feedback.

Hill and Stewart (2000, p.105) suggests there are problems defining what an SME is and Viten, Lane and Hayes (1997, pp.10-24) have found there are problems with the training function in SME's, the research findings have revealed some very practical ideas that could be used by the respondents in conducting training. Fifty two per cent (52%)of respondents feel training during work hours is a must. Management must accept that training is relevant and necessary and so completely contradict what Viten, Lane and Hayes (1997, p.16) suggest that in SME's owners and managers feel that training is irrelevant and unnecessary.

Chapter 6

6.1 General

Training forms an integral part of organisations achieving their objectives yet, five per cent (5%) of respondents, don't know who is in charge of training. This however does give cause for concern because how is the money being used in relation to training. On a positive note all of the respondents do conduct training, which will benefit the organisations concerned.

The vast majority of SME 's are definitely spending a reasonable amount of money on training as the authors findings have proven.

Training programmes have to be driven by an objective and it is very transparent that the respondents conduct training programmes for specific reasons. The primary reasons/ drivers are customer service which is important in SME's attaining that competitive advantage, making the staff more efficient by using cross functional cooperation and technology.

Another conclusion is that all of the respondents do believe that training is necessary in order to compete with other organisations, but still five per cent (5%) of respondents don't know who trains which definitely needs further investigation?

Induction is definitely used as a training tool, which shows that SME's do believe in familiarisation which can only have a positive effect on the employee. By having an induction does contradict the general feeling that a lot of owner/managers find training irrelevant/ unnecessary.

6.2 Pre Training Requisite

One (1) conclusion to be drawn from the findings is, the respondents non reliance on feedback before designing a training programme. This begs the question how the trainers know how effective the training is for both the organisation and from the individuals point of view.

6.3 Training Needs Analysis

It is very encouraging to see from the findings that one hundred per cent (100%) of respondents do conduct a training needs analysis, but on the negative side, out of the total respondents who conduct a training needs analysis only eighty three per cent (83%) do it all of the time. If only eighty three per cent (83%) of respondents conduct a training needs analysis all of the time, then how do the remaining seventeen per cent (17%) of respondents know how effective all of their training courses are? Evidently they cannot know how effective the courses are and thus it must lead to some courses not reaching their objectives, leading to inefficiencies and financial wastage.

The findings also seem to suggest that overall, a training needs analysis is conducted by the vast majority of respondents. It is evident that there does not seem to be a clear distinction between the different areas of the training needs analysis, but all are thrown into one block and the training is pulled from this. While this seems to reflect an ad-hoc way it does seem to be successful as the longevity of the employment relationship in an SME seems to be approximately ten (10)- twenty (20) years.

6.4 Design and Implementation

It is clear from the findings that the respondents are conscious of cost, ninety eight per cent (98%) of the respondents have used coaching, mentoring and job rotation, which seem to be very effective ways of training but at a minimal cost. It also seems to back up the suggestion, of the view of a lot SME's, that if you remove somebody from the workplace it causes disruption, but the coaching, mentoring and job rotation techniques are hands on driven training with very little disruption to the workplace. It is also very interesting that ninety eight per cent (98%) of respondents agree with Stredwick (2002, p.18) because his book is aimed at all aspects of the SME sector and his extensive research revealed these areas.

One significant statistic that the research has revealed is that, quite a significant percentage of respondents thirty two per cent (32%) use the video training technique but found this to be the least effective, so why are these organisations using this technique? One answer could be the fact that training could be conducted in the work

place in small confines with little expense, one does not know, but this could be something for future research.

6.5 Evaluation

Even though the research has revealed that all respondents conduct a training needs analysis, only ninety seven per cent (97%) evaluate. This shows that three per cent (3%) of respondents do not conduct a proper training needs analysis, because if they did conduct a proper training needs analysis they would all evaluate. On a positive note the research findings have shown that eighty five per cent (85%) of respondents who evaluate conduct the evaluation all of the time, which is a massive increase compared to Morley, Gunnigle and Turner (1999/2000) who found that only thirteen per cent (13%) of respondents evaluate all of the time.

One interesting area that definitely needs further research is that the minority of respondents who do not evaluate, do so because of poor education/information in relation to the training area. Which seem confusing because all of the respondents seem to recognise the importance of training.

Another interesting conclusion is the fact that while ninety seven per cent (97%) of respondents evaluate only twelve per cent (12%) of respondents have ever heard of Kirkpatrick evaluation model. This may cause concern as to the quality of the evaluation being conducted at various levels in the respondents organisation and may require further research in the future to solely look at evaluation, because evaluation is essential to effective training.

Another positive conclusion that can be drawn from the research findings is the fact that training is no longer inhibited by the managers view that why train if staff are going to be poached. This view according to the research finding is only held by fourteen per cent (14%) of respondents which is a very big positive for the SME sector. On the negative side the old attitude of only training people who are willing to stay long term was applicable to seventeen per cent (17%) of respondents, which is still a worrying factor that needs to be addressed. One area that is outside the respondents realm is the literature regarding the accessibility of information in relation

to training courses, nineteen per cent (19%) of respondents feel that is a problem that needs to be dealt with.

The respondents all agreed that training does benefit the organisation, but what is very interesting is that most of the advantages aired by the respondents were all related to developing the individual, which looks very good for the future of HRM.

Chapter 7

Recommendations

From reviewing the literature and the findings, it is suggested that the following may be studied further.

All SME's managers and owners know who is in charge of training so as to have a contact to talk about training.

It is recommended that feedback is used after and before all training programmes. This could be enacted at a minimal cost if SME's organise themselves into small groups, after all most feedback forms will be generic with some area specific to the organisation. This suggestion also applies to the area of training needs analysis.

From the point of view that training causes disruption to the workplace, it is suggested that from the findings that the two per cent of respondents who have never used coaching, mentoring or job rotation try this system out. It is also suggested that this two per cent try and get some co-operation from other SME's in the area to get advice and guidance in this area.

The video training technique is the most used technique, but the least effective, so it is suggested that some other form of training be looked at, whether it is computer based training or another form of training. According to the findings cost does not seem to bother SME's too much, but an efficient training technique may be achieved if a selection of SME's get together and use a training consultant to design an effective and efficient training programme.

Evaluation is critical to assessing whether a training programme achieves its objectives or not, so it is suggested that the respondents that do not evaluate use the enclosed evaluations forms in appendix two (2). These forms have being tested in a selection of SME's and seem to work. By having these forms there is no excuse for not conducting evaluation all of the time.

Finally the view that training only applies to long term employees has to end and manager/owners have to accept that everybody has to train and that ultimately the

benefits of increased efficiency, better motivation to mention a few will increase profits.

It must be noted that the conclusions and recommendations suggested in this thesis are based on participating respondents and may be subject to change, if the research is expanded. But the findings do reflect a cross section of SME' in the South-East of Ireland.

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Appendix 1

Coaching

Armstrong (2001, p.892) suggests that coaching involves the transferral of knowledge or skills on a one-to-one basis. Coaching should be informal and part of a formal process designed to meet the individual. IBEC (2004, p.19) found that a good coach will support trainees, in their decision making.

There are many models of coaching but Whitmore 1992(cited in IBEC 2004, p.18) provides a good model. It consists of three areas (GROW).

G---Goals------(identify a goal)

R---Reality------(of the current situation)

O---Options------(to close the gap)

W---Will------(to commit to achieving the goal)

Stedwick (2002, p.119) incorporates the model of (Whitmore, 1992) but adds a few other dimensions. Those dimensions are: provide coaching in small chunks; never give what is called a lecture; praise success; and always think about the person receiving the information.

IBEC (2004, p.18) found that coaching can incorporate change and since change has joined life inevitable with taxes and death, it can help organisations adapt.

Mentoring

Armstrong (2001, p.892), and IBEC (2004, p.18) suggest that mentoring entails the systematic selection of senior employees based on skill and knowledge to develop the junior employees. Desimone et al (2002, p.488) suggest that a mentoring relationship helps to serve both the psychological and career of both parties. Stredwick (2002, p.120) has found that mentoring does not have to be a formal process especially in SME's but using the intellectual capital that exist in the organisation. Armstrong (2001, pp.893/4) suggest that mentoring helps employees by: giving guidance on the acquisition of knowledge; information on how things are done in the organisation; coaching in specific areas and help develop life long learning.

Armstrong (2001, p.893) suggests there are no specific set procedures for developing a mentoring programme.

Job Rotation

Desimone et al (2002, p.486) define job rotation as providing different jobs in different parts of the workplace and it provides the employee with the opportunity to become multi-skilled and prevent boredom. Armstrong (2001, p.893) suggest that the success of this training method depend on having a proper plan of objectives to be achieved.

Action Learning

Action learning is defined as a

‘ process of learning and reflection, supported by colleagues with the intention of getting things done ’

Source: McGill and Beatty 1995 (cited n Moran 2002, p.30)

Moran (2002, p.31) suggest that the core element of action learning is gaining the practical experience of solving real life problems and transferring this newly acquired knowledge or skill to the workplace. Armstrong (2001, p.894) has found that action learning consists of groups of people coming together, so that they can learn from one another and are committed to the cause, but it cannot be a once off situation it has to develop over a period of time. The facilitator is external and their aim is to facilitate communication between the group and not to impose their own attitude or view on the group. Moran (2002, p.30) suggest that this is a good training method for micro enterprises.

Assignments

Armstrong (2001, p.896) This entails giving the individual a project at the end of the training programme and seeing what conclusions are drawn from it. It is designed to see can the person transfer their knowledge to the workplace.

Guided Reading

Armstrong (2001, p.896) suggest that this focuses on giving the employee specific books that relate to the procedures and culture of the organisation and asking them to comment on what they have learned. This is a very good way for employees to gain knowledge of the organisation as long as the information is relevant.

Computer Based Training

Armstrong (2001, p.897) This embraces the modern technology available nowadays, to enhance or train people. It is very useful for long distance training. This form of training allows trainers to allow interaction between trainees by designing the course to suit the participants. Small Firms Survey (SFA) (2002, p.6) found that computer training is the most popular type of training amongst SME's.

Lecture

This training type consists of a an individual talking at the top of the training location and having little or no participation. A key to effective lecturing is to have effective aids.

Discussion

Armstrong (2001, p.900) suggest that by using this technique it enables the participants to learn from the experience of others and get a greater understanding of diverse attitudes. The trainer needs to encourage communication and guide the trainees a certain way according to the objective of the discussion. It is suggested that the use of open-ended questions will encourage interaction between the trainees. Key to its success is to make sure that no dominant person who dominates the discussion.

Case Study

This is where an event is laid out by the trainer with the aim of developing the trainees to analyse the problems and possible solution. It is mainly used for team leaders or managers so as to develop their diagnostic skills. Trainers will challenge the opinions of the trainees to get the rationale behind their answers.

Role Playing

This involves getting the trainees to act out a situation, to give trainees a more realistic view of what could happen in a given situation. It can develop interactive skills, and allows employees to get feedback on what they are doing wrong.

T group Training

Armstrong (2001, p.903) suggest that the this training has three objectives

- To increase sensitivity; to enable an individual to be better able to adapt to the behaviour of others.
- To increase diagnostic ability; the ability to perceive accurately the state of the relationships between others
- To increase skill; the ability to recognise what type of behaviour is needed in a given situation.

Appendix 2

INDUCTION TRAINING QUESTIONNAIRE- REACTION LEVEL EVALUATION- (TRAINEE)

Objectives : participants have been introduced to the following :

1. G.M.P.
2. PARTNERSHIP
3. COMPANY HISTORY, BACKGROUND, ORGANISATION STRUCTURE & MARKETS
4. COMPANY HANDBOOK, UNION AGREEMENT, GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES, DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

REACTION EVALUATION

Your co-operation in completing this evaluation, would be appreciated.
Please respond to each question by marking your rating on the seven-point scale.

	YES						NO
1. How well do you understand -							
a) G. M. P.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
b) Partnership	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
c) Co. History	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
2. Was the information clearly presented							
a) G.M.P	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
b) Partnership	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
c) Co. History	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
3. Was there enough time	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
4. Did the Instructors help you learn							
a) G.M.P.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
b) Partnership	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
c) Co. History	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
5. Overall this training was beneficial	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Any Other Comments:

Trainers: _____

REACTION LEVEL QUESTIONNAIRE (TRAINER)

TRAINER FEEDBACK ON THE TRAINING COURSE

Course title: _____ Course date: _____

Name: _____ Organisation: _____
(if applicable)

Did you develop the course? Yes
No

How many times have you delivered this course?

Only this once

2 – 5 times

6+ times

We want to ensure that the training delivered is as effective as possible. We would be grateful if you would complete this questionnaire.

1. TRAINING OBJECTIVES

Please comment on the extent to which you felt the training objectives of the course were met and on any factors that might have affected their achievement.

2. CONTENT, LEVEL AND LENGTH

Please comment on whether you felt the content, level and length of the course were about right. If not, please put forward some ideas for how the course can be improved.

3. TRAINING METHODS

Please comment on the effectiveness of the training methods used in meeting the training objectives.

4. FACILITIES AND ADMINISTRATION

a) Please comment on the adequacy and quality of the training facilities.

b) Please comment on the adequacy and quality of the general accommodation, catering and service.

c) Please comment on the quality of the administration both before and during the course.

5. GENERAL COMMENTS

Please add any comments which may help us improve the quality of the training experience, i.e. in terms of meeting the delegates' expectations and needs, making the programme more relevant to their jobs, providing a high quality of training and facilities.

Handling Disciplinary Situations – Learning Evaluation (Knowledge/simple)

The Purpose of the questionnaire is to get feedback on how successful the course has been. Individual results will be regarded as confidential. Please answer the following questions. Do not dwell too long over your answers but rely on your initial reaction. Fill in the box for the answer you have selected – T for a true statement, F for false and DK for don't know. Please do not guess; if you do not know the answer, fill in the box 'don't know'.

1. The sole purpose of discipline is punishment.

T	F	DK
---	---	----

2. After hearing all the evidence you should always adjourn a disciplinary hearing to consider your decision.

T	F	DK
---	---	----

3. Circumstances should always be taken into account when deciding on a case of discipline.

T	F	DK
---	---	----

4. It can be fair for people to be given different punishments even though they have committed the same 'crime'.

T	F	DK
---	---	----

5. The disciplinary process should be used to teach employees the 'rules'.

T	F	DK
---	---	----

6. Under the disciplinary procedure an employee is entitled to have union representation when a witness statement is being taken down.

T	F	DK
---	---	----

7. Gross misconduct is generally seen as

T	F	DK
---	---	----

misconduct serious enough to destroy the contract and make any further working relationship and trust impossible.

8. The rules of natural justice provide that a person subject to the disciplinary process may call witnesses in their defence.

T	F	DK
---	---	----
9. The circumstances of the case against a shop steward should be discussed with a full-time official before any disciplinary action is taken.

T	F	DK
---	---	----
10. An appeal should be made within five working days of receipt of notice of the punishment.

T	F	DK
---	---	----
11. Breaches of disciplinary rules should be disregarded after a specified period of time.

T	F	DK
---	---	----
12. An employee can appeal against an informal oral caution.

T	F	DK
---	---	----
13. An employee may be dismissed for a 'first offence'.

T	F	DK
---	---	----
14. A final written caution will warn that dismissal will result if there is no satisfactory improvement.

T	F	DK
---	---	----
15. An employee has to have been employed

T	F	DK
---	---	----

by the Company for two years before s/he can bring a claim for race or sex discrimination.

16. A written warning will always set out the right of appeal.

T	F	DK
---	---	----

17. An industrial tribunal will take into account the details of a case *and* the way it has been handled.

T	F	DK
---	---	----

18. Except in cases of race or sex discrimination, an employee has to have been employed by the company for two years before s/he can bring a claim for unfair dismissal.

T	F	DK
---	---	----

19. Shop stewards are subject to the same disciplinary standards as any other employee.

T	F	DK
---	---	----

20. Sexual and racial harassment will always be considered by the company for disciplinary action.

T	F	DK
---	---	----

Job Behaviour level questionnaire for time management training course

The purpose of this survey is to evaluate how effective the time management training programme that you attended has been in improving your performance in your job. It is emphasised that it is not intended to access your performance and all individual information collected will be treated confidentially. It is important that you answer the questions as honestly and fully as possible.

1. To what extent has the course helped in you prioritising and planning your workload?
Please circle the appropriate rating.

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very much

2. Please tick if you were using any of the following techniques:

	Before the course	Now
Time log	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A diary Planner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sorting in-tray	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other planning tools, please Specify:		
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. To what extent has the course helped you control interruptions more effectively?
Please circle the appropriate rating

	Before the course	Now
Keeping an interruptions log	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Secretary screening calls/visitors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Colleague screening calls/visitors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Use of surgery times	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working in quiet place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Booking meeting with yourself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others, please Specify:		
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. How many meetings have you chaired since the course? Please tick the appropriate box.

No meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>
1 – 3 meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 – 6 meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 or more meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. To what extent has the course helped you to chair meetings more effectively? Please circle the appropriate rating.

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very much

7. Please tick if you have used any of the following techniques:

	Before the course	Now
Having clear meetings objectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using an agenda	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sending and agenda out in advance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Allocating times to agenda items	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specifying type of outcome for	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Items, e.g. for information/decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Others, please Specify:

_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. How many meetings have you participated in since the course? Please tick the appropriate box.

- No meetings
- 1 – 3 meetings
- 4 – 6 meetings
- 7 or more meetings

If your answer was *no meetings* go to Q11

9. To what extent has the course helped you to chair meetings more effectively? Please circle the appropriate rating.

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very much

10. Please tick if you have used any of the following techniques:

	Before the course	Now
Requesting an agenda	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Setting aside time to prepare for meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attending for specific items only	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sending writing contributions when involved in minority of items	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others, please Specify:		
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. To what extent has the course helped you delegate more effectively? Please circle the appropriate rating.

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very much

If your answer is N/A please go to Q13

12. Please tick if you have used any of the following delegation techniques:

	Before the course	Now
Preparing written brief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clarifying use of resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Setting clear timescales	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Setting up review meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. Overall, how would you rate your time management skills before the course and now. Please circle the appropriate rating (1 indicating poor time management skills ...6 indicating very good time management skills).

Before the course	1	2	3	4	5	6
Now	1	2	3	4	5	6

14. Are there any problems or barriers to you implementing the time management skills that you learned on the training course?

15. Looking back on the course are there any comments or changes you would like to suggest for improving the effectiveness of the course?

In order to help us analyse the results of the survey it would be helpful if you could let us have some information about yourself:

Age	Sex	Ethnic Origin	Grade
< 25 Years	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26 - 35 Years	<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
36 - 45 Years	<input type="checkbox"/>		
46 - 55 Years	<input type="checkbox"/>		
56 + Years	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Appendix 3

To : All participating companies

From: Kieran O Connor,
14 Iniscarra,
Collins Avenue,
Dunmore Road,
Waterford

Date: 25th

May 2005

Course: BA(hons) in Human Resource Management.
National College of Ireland.

Ref: Questionnaire

Dear Respondent:

As per telephone call in February 2005, please find enclosed the questionnaire we discussed for your attention.

Before I proceed any further I would like to thank all participants for taking the time to fill out this survey.

Please be assured that all the information supplied will be treated with the strictest confidence.

- 1. The company name is not required.**
- 2. Please answer all questions. Where a question does not apply to you please mark it N/A.**
- 3. Space for comment is provided at the back of the questionnaire if needed.**
- 4. If possible could the questionnaire be returned by 7th of June 2005.**
- 5. For quick return I have enclosed a self stamped address envelope.**
- 6. If any respondent is finding difficulty in answering the questions, I can be contacted on 087-9580612.**

Once again thank you for your co-operation.

Yours Sincerely

Kieran O Connor

Questionnaire

General:

1. How many employees do you employ?

(Please tick one answer only)

0 – 9

10-49

50 - 249

250+

2. Who is in charge of the training in your organisation?

(Please tick as many as appropriate)

Training officer

Manager

Human Resource Department

Conduct no Training

3. What is the average spend on training as a percentage of payroll in your organisation?

(Please tick one answer only)

.5 – 1%

2.1 – 3%

4% & above

1.1 – 2%

3.1 – 4%

4. What is the average time spent on training in your organisation?

(Please tick one answer only)

Do not train

3 – 5 Days

Below 1 Day

5+ Days

1 – 3 Days

5. What are your main drivers for conducting training?

(Please tick as many answers as are relevant)

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Retention | <input type="checkbox"/> | Customer Service | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Motivation | <input type="checkbox"/> | Improve Performance | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Technological Change | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (Please specify below) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

6. Do you think training is relevant?

(Please tick one answer only and give reasons for your answer in space provided. Please note additional paper is provided at the back of this questionnaire, if needed to complete your answer)

- YES** **NO**

7. Do you conduct an induction process)

(Please tick one answer only. If your answer is no, please move to question 9)

- YES** **NO**

8. If your answer to question 7 is Yes, please give details of the induction process.

Pre Training Requisite:

9. Out of the following 4 areas please rate the areas in order of importance.

(Please circle a number between 1 -4 on each area, 1 being the most important and 4 being the least important)

	Important			not
important				
Learner is motivated to learn	1	2	3	4
The organisational culture supports and encourages learning	1	2	3	4
The employee will benefit from support and feedback	1	2	3	4
Learning will be most effective if it satisfy the needs of the learner	1	2	3	4

Training Needs Analysis:

10. Do you conduct a training needs analysis?

(Please tick one answer only, if your answer is never please move to question 15)

All of the time

On selected courses only

Some of the time

Never

11. When conducting a training needs analysis, how do you go about it?

(Please give a detailed answer in the space provided, however there is additional paper provided at the back of the questionnaire if needed to complete your answer)

12. When conducting a training needs analysis at the organisational level, what areas do you look at?

(Please give a your answer in the space provided below, there is additional paper provided at the back of the questionnaire, if needed to complete your answer)

13. When conducting a training needs analysis at the job level, what areas do you look at?

(Please give a your answer in the space provided below, there is additional paper provided at the back of the questionnaire, if needed to complete your answer)

14. When conducting a training needs analysis at the individual level, what areas do you look at?

(Please give your answer in the space provided below, there is additional paper provided at the back of the questionnaire, if needed to complete your answer)

Design/Implementation of Training:

15.(a) Of the following company on the job training method, have you ever used any of these methods?

(Please tick as many as is relevant. If you have used other methods please list in space provided below)

Coaching Mentoring Job Rotation

15.(b) Of the methods mentioned 15. (a), how successful were they in achieving your organisations objectives?

(Please rate the methods by circling a number between 1 – 4, 1 being the most effective and 4 being the least effective)

	Most effective		Least effective	
Coaching	1	2	3	4
Mentoring	1	2	3	4
Job – Rotation	1	2	3	4
Another	1	2	3	4

16.(a) Of the following company off-the – job training methods, have you ever used any of these methods?

(Please tick as many as is relevant. If you have used other methods please list in space provided below)

Action Learning Assignment Guided Reading
 Computer based Training Video

16. (b) Of the methods mentioned in 16. (a), how successful were they in achieving your objective?

(Please rate the methods by circling a number between 1 – 4, 1 being the most effective and 4 being the least effective)

	Most Effective			Least Effective		
Action Learning	1	2	3	4	5	6
Computer Based Training	1	2	3	4	5	6
Assignment	1	2	3	4	5	6
Guided Reading	1	2	3	4	5	6
Video	1	2	3	4	5	6
Another	1	2	3	4	5	6

17. (a) Of the following off- the- job training methods, have you ever used any of these methods?

(Please tick as many as is relevant. If you have used other methods pleas list in space provided below)

Lecture Discussion Case Study
 Role Play Simulation T-group Training

17. (b) Of the methods mentioned in 17. (a), how successful were they in achieving your objective?

(Please rate the methods by circling a number between 1 – 6, 1 being the least effective and 6 being the most effective)

	Most Effective			Least Effective		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Lecture	1	2	3	4	5	6
Role Play	1	2	3	4	5	6
Discussion	1	2	3	4	5	6
Simulation	1	2	3	4	5	6
Case Study	1	2	3	4	5	6
T-Group Training	1	2	3	4	5	6

18. When designing a Training session, how do you set your objectives?

(Please give a detailed answer in the space provided below, if needed additional paper is provided for at the back of this questionnaire to complete your answer)

Evaluation:

19. Do you evaluate a training programme?

(Please tick one answer only. If your answer is Yes proceed to question 20, if the answer is NO proceed to question 23)

YES

NO

20. How often do you evaluate?

(Please tick one answer only)

After every training programme

Monthly

Yearly

When the humour takes me

21. Why do you evaluate?

(Please tick as many answers as is relevant)

To see if the programme met the objectives of the organisation.

To see if the programme met the objectives of the individual.

Return on investment.

Have to do it, to justify employment.

Its what all the books say.

22. What mediums do you use to evaluate?

(Please tick as many answers as is relevant).

Performance Appraisals

Informal meetings

Interview

Attitude Survey

Questionnaire

Coaches

Group discussion

Mentors

23. Why don't you evaluate?

(Please tick whichever answers are relevant. If your answer to question 19, was yes please ignore this question)

Don't Train Cost/Time No added advantage

Training is over its too late I know what is best Lack of Manpower

23. Have you ever heard of Kirkpatrick's model of evaluation?

(Please tick one answer only)

YES

NO

24. Why are their major barriers/deficiencies/ problems in the training area in Small Medium Enterprises.

(Please circle a number between 1 – 6 on each item, 1 being the major barrier and 6 being the least barrier. If all are major barriers, rate as appropriate)

	Major Barrier				Not so Major	
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Fear of staff being poached once trained.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Only train staff that are in for the long term.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Lack of information on the benefits of training.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Training causes disruption to the workplace.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Economies of scale	1	2	3	4	5	6
Availability of suitable training courses	1	2	3	4	5	6

25. What advantages does training bring to the organisation?

(Please give a detailed answer in the space provided below, additional paper is provided at the back of the questionnaire if needed to complete answer)

26. What is your personal opinion of how training should be conducted in the small medium enterprise sector.

(Please give a detailed answer in the space provided below)

Appendix 4

SME = Small Medium Enterprises.

HRM = Human Resource Management.

TFS = Task Force Survey

HRP = Human Resource Planning

R & S = Recruitment and Selection

I.B.E.C. = Irish Business and Employers Confederation

S.F.A. = Small Firms Association