



## **BEST PRACTICE Awareness Training**

Understanding precedes behavior change. It is difficult to understand and deal with a new concept without being aware of its existence. Awareness training should create knowledge of the defined topic and initiate some action associated with that topic; however, these objectives do not have to occur simultaneously. For example, create awareness about the effectiveness of a software inspection technique, and start the process to implement that technique a few weeks later. The delay allows time to assimilate the concept before beginning action. Until people understand an area and its impact, they are not prepared to act.

Developing a program for awareness training involves the following two steps. Each step consists of five tasks.

### **1. Prepare for Awareness Training**

- **Task 1: Select awareness topic.**

The topic is usually a problem or a new approach to doing work, and is normally related to accomplishing the organization's mission. Sample topics include the number-one cause of operational problems, or a new work approach, such as implementing quality principles in the IT group.

- **Task 2: Identify the topic's customers.**

Individuals with a vested interest in the topic need to have the awareness training. These are the people who will benefit from, or be adversely affected by, the topic. For example, for software inspections, customers would be the individuals whose products are being inspected as well as those performing the inspection. Customers could also include users of those products because inspections affect delivery date and quality.

- **Task 3: Define objectives for awareness training.**

The objectives relate to the action that is initiated as part of the awareness training, indicating the outcome or results to be accomplished relating to the topic. In the topic of software inspections, the objective may be to initiate software inspections in



the systems development process. The training would focus on accomplishing those objectives.

- **Task 4: Define customer benefits.**

Defining and selling the benefits to the customer is an important part of the training. To define the benefits, identify each category of customer, and then determine what benefits that customer would receive if the training objectives were accomplished. Some benefits may be negative, in which case the training must be supportive of that loss of benefit.

- **Task 5: Develop administrative training plan.**

A plan needs to be developed for conducting the training. The plan contains information related to the awareness topic as well as general administrative activities. The content of the awareness topic is discussed in Step 2; however, in actual practice, the specific topic would need to be developed in this task.

Administrative activities to consider when planning awareness training are: identifying attendees (limit sessions to 25 people), inviting attendees (homogenous groups work best), arranging a training room and equipment, preparing an agenda (limit training to 2 hours maximum), arranging handout materials, soliciting a highranking person (i.e., champion) to introduce the topic, and assigning training responsibilities

## **2. Conduct Awareness Training**

In addition to introducing the topic, attendees, and trainers, the awareness training should cover these five basic topical areas:

- **Task 1: Attendees' needs.**

Begin the session by stating the topic, and relating it to the attendees' needs. The needs should relate closely to the objectives and benefits of the awareness topic. Some research may be necessary to assure that the true needs of the attendees are identified.

- **Task 2: Awareness topic/product.**

Describe the product/activity that is to be addressed or is a solution to the problems identified in the need. For example, software inspection would



be the activity to satisfy the need for on-time delivery and high quality, while a description of operational abnormal terminations would be the problem to be solved. The rest of the awareness session deals with solving the problem or getting a product/activity implemented.

- **Task 3: Identify objections to product/problem.**  
Attendees may object to the severity of the problem or the product that is being proposed. For example, if abnormal terminations are discussed, they might consider the current level to be normal; and if software inspections were implemented, they would object to the time taken to conduct an inspection. The purpose of this task is to ensure that all the objections are clearly identified.
- **Task 4: Overcome objections.**  
  
Having objections is a normal and positive step of change. Dealing with the objections is the key to initiating change effectively. In this step resolution of the customer's objections is addressed.
- **Task 5: Recommend course of action.**  
  
So that subject matter is not forgotten, awareness training should always end with some action to take. If attendees are charged with performing some action, or will shortly become involved in some action, the training will become effective and practical.

## References

Guide – CSQA Common Body Of Knowledge, V6.2