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“It all starts with a smile”: Training Student Employees in a Learning Commons Environment

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METHODOLOGY

- Nationally distributed survey, 141 responses
- 40 questions about training methods, techniques & content; estimated training hours; follow-up training; supervisor satisfaction.

QUESTIONS

- What are the best practices for student employee training?
- Is it possible to quantify the ideal number of training hours?
- What are the most important training components for students working in a busy service environment?

“IT all starts with a smile”

TRAINING STUDENT EMPLOYEES IN A LEARNING COMMONS ENVIRONMENT

FINDINGS

Training techniques: The lecture and reading the manual techniques were not used by supervisors who were Extremely Satisfied and were mentioned minimally in the Very Satisfied category.

The lecture technique was most prominent for supervisors who were Somewhat or A little Satisfied.

TRAINING TIME:

Supervisors who provided Very or Extremely Satisfied ratings spend an average of 13 hours to fully train each library student worker.

AREAS OF FOCUS:

Supervisors who provided Very or Extremely Satisfied ratings spend an average of 13 hours to fully train each library student worker.

- Working with clients (e.g., customer service, professionalism) 94%
- Providing directional help (e.g., directing clients to locations, services) 77%
- General procedures or office mechanics (e.g., submitting time cards, etc.) 65%

RECOMMENDATIONS

To achieve the most satisfaction with library student employee performance, include the following techniques in your student training.

- Practice skills individually
- Practice skills in groups or in pairs
- Provide quizzes or concept checks

Plan on devoting a significant portion of training to customer service and developing professional attributes for a library student worker.

Anticipate on budgeting at least 10 hours of training per student employee.

ADVICE FROM THOSE IN THE TRENCHES

HIRING: Focus on personal qualities & communication skills. “It all starts with a smile and friendly greeting. Interpersonal skills and a strong work ethic are key; other things can be taught.”

TRAINING: Involve experienced student employees, whether for leading training sessions or for shadowing. “Make the training very interactive and allow peer shadowing before fully scheduling the new student on their own.”

SUPERVISOR NEEDS: Provide structure and communicate the value of the work students perform, so that student employees can see that they play an important role in fulfilling the library mission. “Lower expectations [in terms of] when to expect students to ‘know’ all of training. Explain why they are being tasked to do jobs, to help library, or staff member on projects not just for busy work.”

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

1. What are the best practices for student employee training?
2. Is it possible to quantify the ideal number of training hours?
3. What are the most important training components for students working in a busy service environment?

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BIBLIOGRAPHY


