Will They Stay or Will They Go?

Affecting Employee Attrition through Training

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Abstract

Employee turnover affects all businesses in all industries. It has a destabilizing effect on the workforce and customer base, weakening a company's profitability. The Business in City, ST, a super-regional alarm monitoring company, provides a 24/7 customer service contact center. The high costs of employee turnover prompted an examination of The Business's methods to reduce staffing costs. Recent studies suggest that inadequate training is a primary factor contributing to employee turnover and that a student-centered, active learning training method improves knowledge retention, recall, and employee engagement. The outcome of this training method, according to the research, is better employee satisfaction and customer service. The Business conducted a quasi-experiment of student-centered learning using a non-random sample of 20 trainees. This project hypothesized that student-centered learning would reduce employee turnover and increase employee engagement as measured by absences. Reducing turnover will contribute to stabilizing the workforce and customer base, reducing costs associated to employee turnover. Results of the project support the hypothesis: the student-centered learning experimental group experienced 27% lower turnover and 74% fewer absences than the control group.

Will They Stay or Will They Go?

Affecting Employee Attrition through Alternative Training Methods

Employee turnover or attrition is defined as "…the rotation of workers around the labor market; between firms, jobs and occupations; and between the states of employment and unemployment" (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000, p. 333). Every business experiences employee attrition and incurs the related direct and indirect costs. Attrition costs include decreased productivity, negative morale, lost customers, and Human Resource (HR) activities to replace the employee. These costs can vary from 25% to 200% of the departing employees' annual compensation (Silva & Toledo, 2009). For example, Hillmer, Hillmer, and McRoberts (2004) conducted a study of replacement costs for a single customer service representative (CSR) making $12.75 per hour at a contact center with 31 CSRs. The study revealed replacement costs of 81% of a CSR's annual salary, or $21,514.89. With contact center attrition rates ranging from 30% to 50% in the United States (Batt, Doellgast, & Kwon, 2005), replacement costs can be staggering. Applying the attrition rates to the contact center in the study by Batt et al. (2005) results in an annual replacement cost in the range of $220,097.32 to $ 340,150.41

The Business, Inc. based in City, ST manages a 24/7 contact center in support of its customer base of over 160,000. As the nations' 14th largest alarm monitoring company, The Business maintains a lean staffing model with less than 275 employees, hiring all entry-level employees through a staffing agency. The contact center is staffed with 82 agents who participated in a three-week basic training course followed by nine weeks of on-the-job training. In 2011, The Business's contact center experienced an approximate 47% annualized turnover ratio comprised of 32 The Business employees (13% of the total) and 81 staffing agency employees (34% of the total). The cost to replace only the 32 The Business employees

approximates $687,398.40 applying the study by Hillmer et al. (2004). Outsourcing some HR costs to the staffing agency probably reduces this amount, but actual figures are not available.

As the face of the company interacting with frustrated customers, CSRs must be well trained. Soft skills such as creativity, problem solving, critical thinking, and teamwork help defuse complaints and resolve customer issues. Employees competent in product knowledge and soft skills improve customer satisfaction (Kramer & Hill, 2011). Well-trained CSRs feel more engaged in the company (Pombriant, 2007) whereas misunderstood job expectations (company culture), a flawed interview process (hiring), and poor training contribute to employee attrition. Further, Woosey (2008) suggests that failing to develop job skills through training is a cause of employee attrition. This research prompted an examination of The Business's: a) company culture, b) hiring practices and, c) training method to determine where to focus efforts to reduce employee attrition.

Examining The Business's company culture, hiring and training methods revealed that the culture will change very slowly and the hiring practice is currently entrenched and non-negotiable. However, The Business's training method was outdated and could easily be modified. The training method emerged as the best starting point to affect employee attrition and, over time, could influence the company culture and the hiring process. The results of The Business's self-examination are discussed in the next sections, followed by an overview of the intervention deployed in this project.

Company Culture

Organizational culture refers to commonly held norms, values, and basic assumptions about problem solving and doing business (Cummings & Worley, 2008). Organizational culture can be captured in descriptions about, "how are things done" and "what is important in this

company." The company culture at The Business is informal and relaxed. When employees are hired, they are introduced to the company through orientation and training, both important building blocks of the company culture. In addition to orientation and training, onboarding includes developing professional relationships and understanding how the employees' function supports the company mission (Derven, 2008). Without successful onboarding, the employee can feel disconnected from the organization. This often leads to decreased morale, lower productivity and higher employee attrition (Friedman, 2006). The Business's current onboarding process begins with the interview where the company is introduced to the applicant. It continues with an orientation session followed immediately by training. According to Derven (2008), professional relationships and understanding the employees' individual contributions are key components to successful onboarding. As part of The Business's onboarding process, the training program should clarify how the employee fits the company mission and provide opportunities for professional relationships to sustain morale, productivity, and employee retention.

The company culture in The Business's contact center is stressful. Due to high attrition, the contact center struggles to answer inbound calls. This causes longer hold times for customers, increasing their frustration, and adding to the stress of the CSR's job. Frustrated customers often ask to speak to a supervisor, preventing supervisors from performing a vital job function of providing consistent, timely employee feedback for development. Too often, supervisors are unable to complete this task, which robs the CSR of an opportunity for positive performance recognition. Sacrificing the relationship between CSR and supervisor is an onboarding failure. Testa (2008) quoted Harry G. Graham in *Workforce Management* who said, "employees leave managers, not companies" (p. 29). A company's culture is pervasive and

difficult to change. The Atlantic Monthly (2012) reports that even a dysfunctional culture will

reproduce, regardless of enthusiastic new employees. In spite of this pervasiveness, company

culture will evolve as the commonly held norms, values and assumptions about doing business

evolve. One of these norms contributing to company culture is The Business's hiring practice.

Hiring Practices

All entry-level employees are hired through a staffing agency. Hiring through a staffing

agency outsources the hiring costs and activities, and is an entrenched practice at The Business.

Using a staffing agency, HR realizes some cost savings, and the process to end a job assignment

for cause is much easier.

The Business hires in groups of 12 to 15 staffing agency employees (SAEs). They attend

a three-week training course and then continue their training for an additional six weeks

performing the job. Prior to starting a staffing assignment, the SAEs are subject to two

background checks. If certain background standards are not met, the employee fails the

background check, which may either prevent the initial staffing agency assignment or result in

attrition from the new-hire class. Failed background checks, attendance, and testing

requirements have resulted in employee attrition rates of above 50% from the new hire class

within the first 30 days. If the SAEs complete 90 days with satisfactory performance, they are

offered permanent employment with The Business. It was not unusual to experience attrition of

75% from a new-hire class by the 90th day. For example, a recent class of twelve new-hires

yielded three customer service agents on the 90th day. This high employee attrition among new

hires impedes the achievement of required staffing needs and perpetuates a costly cycle of hiring.

The Business has also experienced attrition of staffing agency employees immediately

after completing the initial three-week training. This is not uncommon in the contact center

market in City. There is a subgroup of workers who cycle through as many contact centers as

possible until either they feel they have found a company that matches their schedule

requirements or they have exhausted their opportunities (M. Bass, personal communication,

March 6, 2012). Regardless, The Business must approach each SAE as a potential permanent

employee. According to von Hippel, Mangum, Greenberger, Heneman, and Skoglind (1997),

employers who view temporary employees as strategic partners take a more committed approach

to orienting the temporary employee to the corporate culture. This employer commitment often

results in successfully converting the temporary employee to a permanent employee, which is

The Business's goal. The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) reports that

companies who invest in training and development have more engaged employees (Smith, 2009).

One way The Business demonstrates its organizational commitment is through improving the

training method.

Training Method

A popular traditional training method is instructor-led lecture. This is an instructor-

centered approach, focused on covering the course material. A perceived advantage to this

method is that it is useful for massed delivery of information to a large audience at one time. A

disadvantage to instructor-led lecture is that studies show that students only retain about 5% of

what they hear (Lalley & Miller, 2007). Another disadvantage is that lecture does not encourage

student interaction. In addition, the level of learning cannot be easily assessed in lecture-based

training.

Alternative training methods such as student-centered learning and active learning are

growing in popularity. In student-centered learning, the instructor is more a facilitator and guide.

Active learning also involves the student more directly through class discussions, role-playing, group projects, and exams (Karge, Phillips, Jessee, & McCabe, 2011).

The Business's training method and curriculum had not been updated for more than five years. It was lecture-based with a heavy emphasis on the use of PowerPoint presentations to impart knowledge. The PowerPoint slides did not adhere to any style conventions, and presentations had varying formats, backgrounds, color schemes, and often contained the lecture text verbatim. The learning environment during PowerPoint presentations was dark, and the slides contained soft colors and slow moving transitions, which detract from the learning experience (Pugsley, 2010).

The layout of the classroom and arrangement of furniture and equipment created physical and psychological barriers to interaction. In addition, students were subject to a zero-tolerance policy regarding attendance and performance. Arriving late, poor performance on a test or a single absence in the initial three-week training was cause for ending the training assignment without exception. Such strict expectations can create the perception of an environment hostile to the student, impeding the learning experience (Browne-Dianis, 2011). The Business's training environment did not support professional relationship building. It also failed to demonstrate how the employees' individual contribution supported the company mission and was unsuccessful at onboarding the trainees into The Business's culture.

Project Overview and Hypothesis

After examining these three factors, this project focused on the training method as the key to successfully affecting employee attrition and stabilizing the contact center workforce. Based on the research and examination of The Business's methods, the following hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis: employee retention and engagement (as measured by absences) improves when alternative training methods such as student-centered learning are deployed.

This hypothesis is supported by a study of the effect on student retention rates of active learning methods versus lecture (Karge, Phillips, Jessee, & McCabe, 2011). Other recent studies reveal that effective training and knowledge retention (intellectual capital) positively affect employee retention (Longo & Mura, 2008). Training is also a key facet of a positive company culture (Woppman, 2010), which in turn can help direct better candidates through the hiring process by way of positive employee referrals (Shinnar, Young, & Meana, 2004). Research suggests that designing and deploying a training program focused on soft skills and the company's product leads to high customer satisfaction and reduced employee turnover (Doyle & Carolan, 1998). Based on the research and company examination, redesigning the new hire three week training method offered the easiest intervention aimed at affecting employee attrition.

Method

Design and Procedures

The Business conducted a quasi-experiment of student-centered learning with a new hire class of 20 CSRs. First, all PowerPoint presentations were redesigned with a bright color scheme and no transition effects. Rewriting every slide presented only key information in no more than four bullet points. This promotes attentive listening from the students and encourages greater engagement and interaction (Pugsley, 2010).

Random assignment was not possible for this quasi experiment. The new hires were divided into two sections based on job function: 12 SAEs assigned to outbound calls were designated for training using the legacy training method (the control group) and eight SAEs

assigned to inbound calls were designated for training using student-centered learning concepts

(the quasi-experimental group).

Both groups received training on the same content. However, the eight SAEs receiving

student-centered training met in a conference room seated facing each other around the

conference table with only one computer. The 12 SAEs being trained using the legacy method

met in the training room.

In the legacy training room, each student worked on their assigned computer. In the

conference room, only one computer was available. Students were not assigned to a computer

station; rather, they shared this single computer. The computer display was projected to the front

of the conference room allowing all students to view simultaneously. Students individually

performed the computer training tasks while their peers observed and offered encouragement and

coaching if necessary. This encouraged more peer-to-peer interaction than occurred in the

legacy classroom.

Variables

The dependent variables for this quasi-experiment were employee attrition and employee

engagement as measured by attendance. The independent variable was the training method.

Measures

Attrition was measured by comparing the number of SAEs hired by The Business at the

end of their 90-day assignment to the number of SAEs not hired in that same period. Employee

engagement was measured using the employees' number of absences. The Human Resources

department maintains employment records from which employee attrition is calculated.

Calculating attrition compares the total number of separations to the average number of

employees during the reviewed period. For 2011, The Business's contact center experienced an

annualized attrition rate of 47%, of which 34% were SAEs who ended employment within the

first 90 days. Every two weeks, each SAE receives a personal review of attendance, including a

discussion addressing number of absences.

Sample

The control group consisted of two males and 10 females, aged between 25 and 50.

Three students had earned an Associate's degree and all others had a high school education.

Three of the students had no previous contact center experience. The quasi-experimental group

consisted of five males and three females, aged between 22 and 48. One student had earned an

Associate's degree and all others had a high school education. One student had no previous

contact center experience.

Results

Of the eight SAEs trained using this student-centered method, two quit on the second day

of training citing family issues and two were released due to attendance issues. Adjusting for the

two agents who quit for family issues, the attrition rate is 33% for this group after completing

their 90-day training. In contrast, of the 12 SAEs trained using the legacy method, two quit

within the first week of training and six were released for attendance and performance issues.

Adjusting for the two agents who quit in the first week yields an attrition rate of 60% for this

group after completing their 90-day training, 27% higher than the attrition for SAEs trained

using the student-centered method (Figure A1).

The composition of the control and experimental groups (70% more females in the

control group than in the experimental group), merited a review of historical attendance behavior

between male and female agents. After review, no observable difference emerged based solely

on gender at The Business. However, agents who are primary caregivers (children or other

family) tend to be absent more frequently than agents who are not primary caregivers, regardless

of gender.

Ruling out any gender-based effect, a chi square test for independence was performed to

examine the attrition rate for the two samples of SAEs. The attrition rate for SAEs trained using

student-centered methods was found to be significantly different from the attrition rate for the

SAEs trained under the legacy method, $\chi2$ (1, N = 10,) = 4.27, (critical value = 3.84), p = 0.039

(Table B1).

The SAEs trained using student-centered methods demonstrated 74% fewer absences

than the SAEs trained using the legacy method over the last 24 weeks (Figure A2). The mean

absence for the legacy trained SAEs was 4.80 absences. The mean absence for the SAEs trained

using student-centered methods was 1.25 absences. A two-sample, unequal variance t-test

measured the difference in the means of absences. At the 95% confidence interval, the

difference was found to be significant, t(6.70) = 3.48, p = 0.01 (Table B2).

Based on the statistical results, it is unlikely that the difference in the means was due to

chance. These results indicate that training using active learning / student-centered methods may

contribute to a lower attrition rate and better attendance, supporting the project hypothesis.

Discussion

The quasi-experiment conducted in this project supports the hypothesis that a student-

centered, active learning training method has a positive effect on employee attrition. Examining

the culture, hiring practice, and training method at The Business revealed that the training

method was the most promising intervention. Emphasizing training demonstrates corporate

commitment to the employees and should positively affect the company culture over time, supporting a negative correlation to employee attrition (Karge, et al. 2011; Longa & Mura, 2008; Doyle & Carolan, 1998). Well-trained SAEs and CSRs will feel more capable of resolving customer issues, improving their engagement. Most importantly to The Business, applying the findings of the Hillmer et al. (2004) study of replacement costs, every 1% reduction in contact center employee turnover annually would save The Business approximately $24,311.83. By stabilizing the work force in The Business's contact center, The Business will realize significant cost savings that will directly improve financial performance.

Limitations

As a quasi-experiment, there was no random assignment and selection bias may confuse the outcome, which threatens the internal validity of the experiment. It is more difficult to rule out confounding variables in a quasi-experiment. In this case, some confounding variables might include the skill of the instructor to engage adult learners, the different job function for which each group was assigned, age, gender, work experience, education level of the trainees, and the different training classroom environments. Decisive conclusions about the effect of the training method alone cannot be determined, that is, a direct causal relationship of the training method to employee attrition is unclear. Further, the sample size of the experiment was very small, and the experiment occurred over a short time span, diluting statistical results.

Controlling the variables between the control and sample groups would address many of the confounding variables present in this quasi-experiment. Creating a pool of agents with similar educational background and contact center experience, assigning them to the control and experimental groups through random assignment and training both groups in identical learning environments would align this study more closely to a true experiment. The benefit of

conducting a true experiment is a more reliable statistical analysis, which is vital to assessing the results. Another benefit is that the experiment becomes repeatable, allowing validation of results. However, the costs of setting up a true experiment may be prohibitive and operational staffing needs in the contact center would not support any additional time required to construct a true experiment. Another consideration to attempting to control the confounding variables in this quasi-experiment is that the analysis measures human behavior and therefore it is difficult if not impossible to define 'normal' behavior during the experiment. However, implementing these controls could lead to a clearer conclusion that the training method alone produced the improved employee engagement and retention.

Implications

Affecting employee attrition will immediately improve the contact center's service level. Conducting training using student-centered learning methods will equip the SAEs with skills that meet customer expectations, resulting in more satisfied customers and SAEs. This will lead to higher employee engagement and retention, positively affecting the company culture, and generating positive self-efficacy, as SAEs become The Business employees. The successful implementation of student-centered learning methods in a contact center directly translates to significant cost savings to the company. The Business's training method could serve as an example for other contact centers across industry boundaries as companies wrestle with employee attrition, at least from the perspective of onboarding.

Future Research

Obtaining feedback from the participants in this training model is vital, and extensive evaluation of the training method is required. If participants do not value the training method,

learning will suffer (Naugle, Naugle, & Naugle, 2000). Evaluations are also important to determine if the training should continue, the students are learning, and the training fits the business need (Kirkpatrick, 2007). Donald Kirkpatrick's evaluation model, developed in 1959, has been, "…the most reviewed and applied guide to assessing the effectiveness of training in the adult world of work since its inception…" (Naugle et al., p.135). Kirkpatrick's training evaluation model (1996) measures four levels: a) reaction (did the student like the training), b) learning (did the student understand the material), c) behavior (does the student perform their job better) and, d) results (did the company benefit from the training).

At the reaction evaluation level, trainees evaluate the trainer, topic, content and identify how well they enjoyed the training (Kirkpatrick, 1996). Level two measures the knowledge gained by the trainee. This can be a comparison of pre-training knowledge and post-training knowledge, or the formation of a new understanding or attitude. Level three measures on-the-job behavior and how differently the trainee interacts with peers, customers, and managers because of the training. Level four measures performance results that are affected because of the training. Both level three and four require an adequate passage of time to occur for demonstration of meaningful results. Examples of performance results in the contact center might be higher quality scores, and faster customer problem resolution resulting in processing more calls (Naugle, et al 2000; Kirkpatrick, 1996).

In addition to student-centered, active learning training methods, team based learning (TBL) may also support the hypothesis of this project. A recent study comparing student retention under traditional lecture learning and team-based learning found that team-based learning contributed to a significant improvement in student retention (Kreie, et al., 2007). Team-based learning is an instructional strategy that leverages teams to improve student

learning. A major accomplishment of TBL is that students take responsibility for their own as

well as their peers' learning of the course material (Michaelsen, Knight, & Fink, 2002). Students

demonstrate a greater degree of engagement with the course material and their peers (skills

desired by employers), and a better grasp of the application of course concepts.

One activity of TBL is the team infomercial assignment. This assignment applies known

principles of active learning such as: a) doing an activity so as to teach it and, b) engaging in

reflective thinking about such activities. It requires teams of learners to work collaboratively in

developing a topic to present to their peers. Each team must agree on the topic, assign tasks,

negotiate deliverable deadlines, and choose a medium through which to present their topic. Each

team is peer-reviewed and graded on their effectiveness at generating interest in their topic. The

team infomercial assignment helps to develop individual confidence and internal motivation

while enhancing teamwork, critical thinking, and public speaking skills (Matveev & Milter,

2010).

Research shows that students prefer TBL to traditional lecture and find it more

interesting, motivating and fun (Haberyan, 2007). In addition, student engagement is higher in

TBL course work (Haberyan, 2007). This is important because it prevents students from passive

participation. Students are held accountable by their peers for individual contributions to the

team through peer feedback. Haberyan goes on to suggest that TBL promotes skills that

contribute to successful onboarding such as critical thinking, creativity, social skills, and social

tolerance.

TBL provides a venue that promotes social connection through peer-to-peer

accountability on teams. Knowing that their individual contribution will affect the team,

students in TBL courses develop a sense of belonging. There are opportunities through TBL to

engage The Business's new hire students with our company through team relationships

developed in class. Accountability to team members drives higher learning motivation so each

individual performs better (Sweet & Pelton-Sweet, 2008). In TBL, the students also have the

opportunity to evaluate the instructors' effectiveness through feedback. This offers the instructor

the opportunity to learn and continuously develop a better teaching style, creating a feedback

loop of continuous improvement. According to Sibley and Parmelee (2008), TBL develops

communication skills and instills the value of teamwork. Frequent feedback during team

activities helps students learn critical thinking and problem solving skills, which strengthen

employee engagement and onboarding into the company culture.

> *Cost of Implementation*. Currently, The Business has one dedicated trainer and relies on

that trainer and Subject Matter Experts (SME) for knowledge content. The trainer is generally

the only class facilitator. However, during our quasi-experiment, a supervisor who had

previously been our trainer facilitated the experimental group. Our trainer and all SMEs who

contribute to knowledge content must be trained in and understand the TBL philosophy. This

represents a paradigm shift in how The Business approaches training, and requires a modest

financial investment. Approximate costs for training a class of 12 agents are just over

$24,000.00. This cost is steady for every class of 12 agents and includes wages, premiums paid

to the staffing agency and the salary of the trainer (overhead costs such as rent, electricity, etc.

are not available and therefore are excluded). Implementing TBL as proposed will require

training for the trainer, leaders and agents. The Team Based Learning Collaborative (TBLC,

Michael Sweet, President, 2012) presents resources for training and promoting TBL. The TBLC

sponsors an annual meeting offering training for educators and trainers. To ensure a

foundational understanding to TBL, The Business should send the trainer and two managers to

the TBLC annual meeting. These participants would be responsible for conducting workshops upon their return to share the concepts of TBL with the leadership team. Cascading this knowledge is essential to supporting the team-based concepts after the agents complete their classroom training.

Estimated costs, including airfare, per diem, hotel and the TBLC seminar for three participants are approximately $9,000.00. The cost to provide 16 hours of training for the leadership team are approximately $3,500.00, and the cost to provide four hours of training for all agents should approximate $4,500.00. Total estimated costs to implement Team Based Learning are $16,700.00. However, the return on investment is easily recovered by retaining one agent (based on Hillmer et al., 2004 who estimated replacement costs for one agent at $21,514.89) and is therefore easily justified.

Reinforce knowledge during On the Job training.   When agents complete the basic three-week classroom training, they continue developing skills through on-the-job training (OJT): learning by doing. Newly trained agents have reported that during OJT, experienced agents sometimes contradict what they were trained in the classroom. This has the effect of undermining the training content and efficacy of the trainer. It will be essential that experienced agents and supervisors support the training delivered in the classroom and provide continuity to the new agents. One method of reinforcing the classroom instruction is to apply Inoculation Theory (Banas, J., & Rains, S., 2010).

Inoculation Theory describes a means of strengthening attitudes to resist attacks. Inoculation Theory anticipates counter-attitudinal attacks and prepares the person to reject them. Essential elements of Inoculation Theory include threat, which acknowledges potential

challenges to knowledge and attitudes, and refutational preemption. Refutational preemption refers to first identifying potential attacks and then preparing for them (Banas, J., & Rains, S.)

Research conducted by McGuire and Pfau (as cited in Banas & Rains, 2010) identified three stages to successful inoculation. They include: a) the warning; b) the weak attack, and; c) active defending. The warning involves identifying and acknowledging that arguments will be presented to threaten knowledge or attitudes. This warning helps prepare the person for the attack. The weak attack involves a gentle challenge to the knowledge or attitude and provides the person an opportunity to defend their position and reject the argument. Active defending requires the student to easily defend his / her knowledge or attitude (Banas, J., & Rains, S., 2010).

In the The Business training environment, agents must be informed of the potential challenge to their knowledge during OJT, preparing them for the attack. The trainer should provide examples of how to refute the arguments of the attack by posing questions challenging the agent, creating the weak attack environment. Allowing the agents to defend their knowledge or attitude empowers them to sustain their knowledge and may even lead to correcting behavior in the contact center.

To sustain the new agents as they begin OJT, in addition to training the leadership team and all agents on the concepts of TBL, agents must be assigned to teams in the contact center to promote peer support. This will also make them accountable to their peers and could have a positive effect on attendance. These peer teams should be empowered to deliver periodic peer evaluations to build peer accountability.

Another important component of training is recurrent training. In the past, operational needs prevented any recurrent classroom training for new products or refresher topics. This

project has initiated research into a dispersed delivery recurrent training method that can be

delivered over the intranet to the CSR's desktop. This would be followed up with semi-annual

face-to-face sessions to reinforce the content. Dispersed delivery involves educational

encounters that are repeated over spaced time intervals. Raman, et al. (2010) studied the

effectiveness of teaching in a dispersed delivery (small portions dispersed at regular intervals)

and found that it improves knowledge retention and recall. Spaced education utilizing the

spacing effect of learning refers to learning sessions that are repeated over time at predetermined

intervals. Research found this method to produce better knowledge retention than a massed

delivery approach to learning, where course content is delivered in a single, lengthy setting

(Kerfoot, DeWolf, Masse, Church, & Federman, 2007). The Raman et al. (2010) study

examined the effect of short, weekly training sessions that built upon the previous session. Their

observation was that this training method produced better long-term memory and recall of the

trained material. A dispersed delivery of recurrent training supports The Business's challenge to

maintain staffing in the contact center to meet service levels and customer expectations.

   Assessing the potential long-term effects. Several metrics should improve after

implementing these training methods. For example, employee attrition is expected to decrease as

agents achieve improved self-efficacy, develop and leverage professional relationships through

improved onboarding, and experience improved job satisfaction. Reduced employee attrition

directly affects replacement costs. As fewer agents leave the contact center, the company

realizes a reduction in explicit costs as the associated replacement costs decline. Also, employee

engagement as measured by attendance should improve, again leading to cost savings. Improved

schedule adherence requires fewer agents and therefore reduces staffing costs.

As previously noted, research indicates that student-centered, active learning and TBL training methods produce better knowledge retention, recall, and more peer-to-peer engagement. Additionally, improved knowledge retention and recall will improve the agent's ability to resolve customer issues, allowing supervisors to focus more on employee development and less on upset customers. Metrics such as service level, quality scores and customer satisfaction should improve. Improved customer interactions may even lead to reducing customer attrition, yielding another explicit cost savings to The Business.

Conclusions

Research implies that team-based learning may be more effective for multi-generational SAEs with varying levels of skill sets (Hart, 2011). Implementing student-centered training including team-based learning along with a program of dispersed delivery recurrent training will improve employee retention for SAEs in the first 90 days (Heal Thyself, 2006). Another anticipated result is that due to better knowledge retention, SAEs and CSRs will more accurately perform their job. Evidence of this will be seen in a high level of employee engagement as demonstrated by improved attendance and improved service level (customer satisfaction). CSRs will enjoy easier memory recall from the dispersed delivery recurrent training, leading to lower average handle time (AHT) and shorter more efficient contact handling. The contact center culture will improve, becoming more positive and less stressful. Both the workforce and the customer base will stabilize resulting in significant cost savings for The Business Security.

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Appendix A

Figure A1: Attrition rate for experimental and control groups after completing their 90-day training.
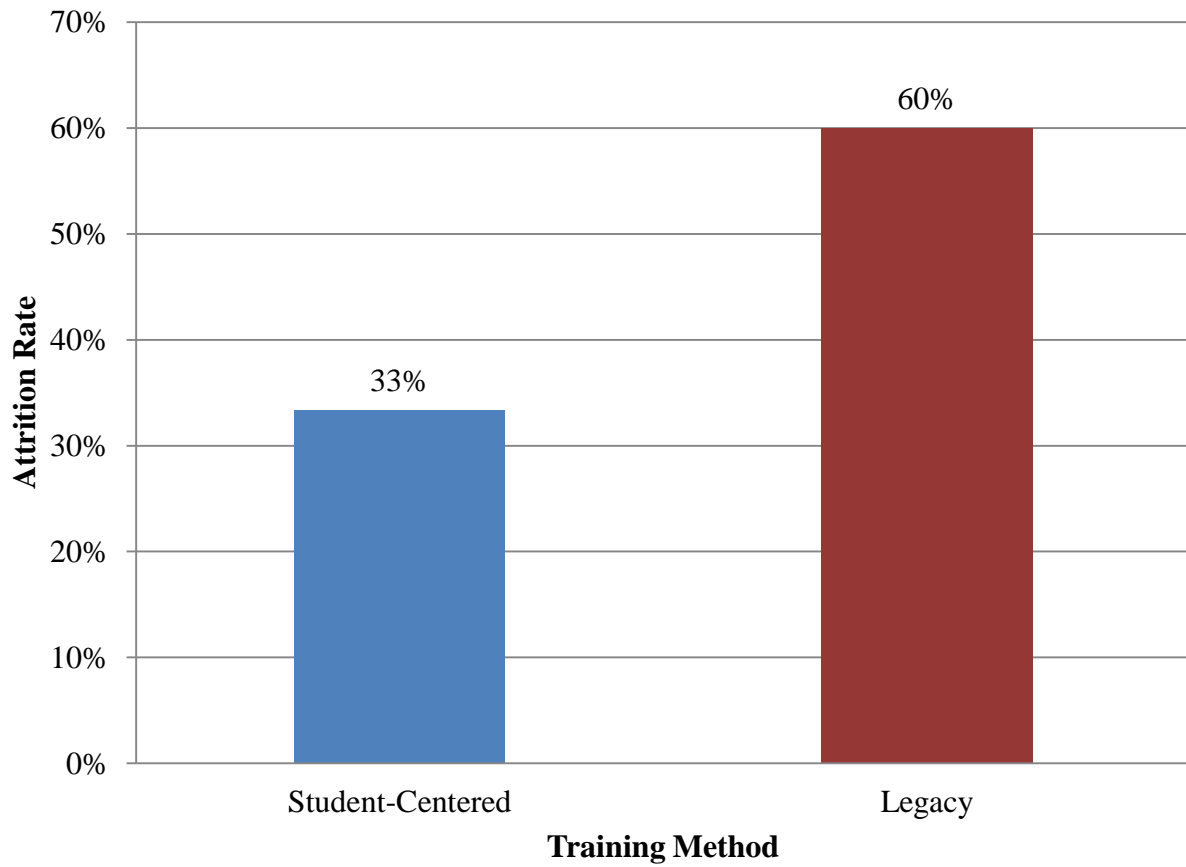
Figure A2: Absences- last 24 weeks for experimental and control groups.
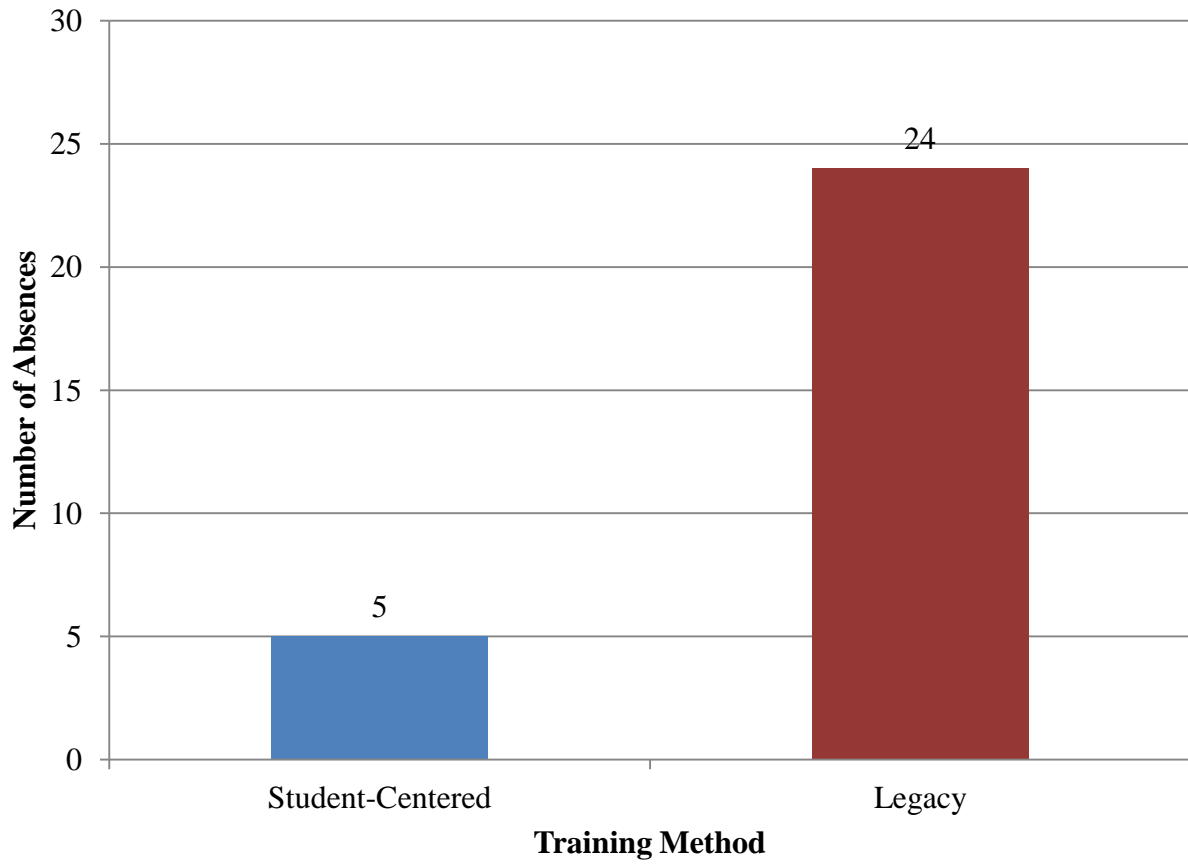
Appendix B

Table B1: $\chi 2$.frequency chart and calculations.

$\chi 2$

	f Observed	f Expected
Legacy	4	10
Student Centered	4	6

$\chi 2$- calculated	4.27
df = 1	
Critical Value @ 0.05α	3.841
p value	0.039

Table B2: Frequency chart and calculations for two sample t-test.

Two sample t-test,
unequal variance

Group	# Absences
Control	6
Control	6
Control	4
Control	6
Control	2
Student Centered	0
Student Centered	3
Student Centered	1
Student Centered	1

t =	3.48
Calculated df =	6.7
Crit Value @ .05α	2.365
two sample unequal variance p =	0.01