

The performance environment

The Talent Development and Professionalization programme (TOP) consists of professionalization projects for the employee within the company for all entry levels until end level.

TOP is based on a learning philosophy. Where starting point 1 is:

- *If an organisation strategy is to be realized, then the company needs to equip the employees for this. Training is an investment in the learning and performing of people.*

This starting point has its effect on the TOP-design:

- *The TOP design has a learning-axis (individual development) and a performance-axis (Strategy Deployment development). Next to the horizontally organized courses on the learning-axis; there are also additional vertically organized facilities on the performance-axis where the learning of teams and of the organisation can be supported.*

TOP therefore intends to contribute to the professionalization / development of teams / departments / business units in terms of realising the strategy of the organisation via de professionalization / development of employees.

Critical Success Factors are amongst others that employees speak one language and that a critical mass exists.

The link between learning (of the individual employees) and performing (of the teams / departments / business units) leads to so-called learning-performing confrontations. These take place explicitly in the 'performance environment'.

1. What is the performance environment?

The performance environment is:

- A regular, concrete work situation with a defined scope (think of a project, a cross-departmental activity, a improvement project) where one or more participants from the course(s) partake and where
- The manager / principal takes the responsibility to professionalize / improve / develop this situation.
- In which the employee with that which is learned in the course (or he / she wants to develop):
 - On department, project or unit level,
 - can as such contribute
 - to the quality / output of the work situation as a whole
 - on agreed points / criteria
 - noticeably/ measurably improves.

The performance environment is therefore a work situation 'in development', where learning is secured (the "What"). The performance environment falls or stands with the commitment of the manager / principal: is he / she out to improve the work situation and does he / she see development as a line-responsibility to bring the team / group / unit to a higher level.

In terms of Goals-Efforts-Results-Effects:

The goal of TOP is: contribute to a more professional organisation / contribute to the realisation of the organisation strategy.

Effort is: linking the all courses to the work situation.

Result is: the score on the evaluation.

(Desired) effect is: the functioning of teams / departments / units on a higher level.

Analogy with a professional sport: it is achieving a higher classification for the football team. To accomplish this, players are exhaustively trained. Higher individual skill and a higher level of team satisfaction is a good result for the course. However, our satisfaction is derived from the score of the football team. That is why to achieve the desired effect, next to practicing during training; the players also participate in professional games during the course where the football team is coached, including the player in training. To win, you need to link training to real work and to the development of the whole football team.

2. What are the criteria for the performance environment?

The overall criteria for the selection of a performance environment are:

- It is a setting, a piece of work that had to be carried out anyway. It is therefore not an assignment that is created to support the training, like with 'action learning', but rather a regular work setting where the knowledge picked up from the course can be applied to the improvement of regular work quality.
- The manager / principal has determined that the trainee has a role in this piece of work and there has to be talk of a real principal (with budget and the authorities linked to the scope of the piece of work).
- There is an explicit link with the (strategic) goals of the organisation and the priority setting. (The WHY of the project or trajectory has to be explicitly clear and there is support of higher management).
- There are measurable PI's that can be agreed upon "for the assignment" itself and the contribution of the employee, who is participating in TOP and the overall assignment. The later is part of the "performance contract". This means it can be substantiated by a business case.
- Required resources are really available (in terms of time, etc. of the principal as well as all parties involved).
- Minimal 2 trainees should participate in the chosen piece of work (besides the manager and other colleagues).
- The "performance environment" in terms of topic is linked to one of the 3 axis of the course; it is:
 - The topic "Hierarchy" (example: an improvement project of a department, developing and implementing a departmental plan, etc.)
 - A project
 - Working in the supply chain (example: a multi-disciplinary assignment that requires the working together of different disciplines)

3. Who initiates and determines?

The actual definition of the performance environment occurs between the principal, the trainee and the programme manager. The programme manager facilitates the selection process by firstly explaining, beside the learning elements, the performance environment during the kick-off, secondly by investigating the possibilities for a performance environment during the intake, emphasising the responsibilities of the manager / principal and reaching to an agreement / "contract" between the manager / principal and the participant of the performance environment.

The principal of the performance environment can be their own manager when it is improvement trajectory but it also be someone from outside the department such as for in a project.

In cases where the manager proactively manages changes of his / her department or unit and would send one or more of his / her employees to TOP, the initiative naturally lies with the manager.

With ambiguities it is of course the responsibility of the trainee to obtain clarification concerning the goals to be achieved, the effort, results and effects of the performance environment.

4. Who evaluates the performance environment?

There are three levels of evaluation.

Firstly, the performance environment can be evaluated as a whole. Normally, these are the PI's where the principal is evaluated on by their manager. Secondly, there are the work related and performance environment related PI's of the trainee, the evaluation lies with the principal.

Thirdly, there is the presentation on the final day of the course. Besides the output of the individual learning process from the course, attention is paid to the participant's performance environment "contract". The latter is placed in the perspective of the development of the performance environment. Besides the participant, the principal or a colleague may also attend

As closure the participant evaluates his / her learning-performing confrontation and can be challenged on this.

5. Consultancy and / or coaching.

In order to optimize the work situation, a limited amount of consultancy / coaching is available for the involved department, project or unit within the framework of the course (2 x 2 hours per 2 trainees). Additional support is linked to a separate agreement with the responsible manager / principal. The trainers from the generic blocks are the consultants. Depending on the focus of the change within the performance environment, it is the trainer from the block manager / employee role, the block working in projects or the block working in the supply chain. If the topic is an improvement in the performance environment related to "working in the supply chain" / optimization of the primary process or logistics, then naturally consultancy can already be claimed for block 3.

6. When is the performance environment determined during the course?

The intention is that the performance environment is determined during intake of the course. Due to circumstances it can be that it cannot be determined at that moment (for example because the principal is not the manager of the participant). For this exception the rule applies that the performance environment is determined latest with block 2.

7. Roles

Role of the participant:

- Indicates what he / she requires for his / her development; content and through profile choice.
- Makes a proposal with respect to the performance environment (takes initiative with respect to the principal if necessary).

Role of the manager:

- Can be the principal.
- Can facilitate / mediate concerning the contact between the programme manager and the principal.

Role of the principal:

- "Promote" his / her project or assignment as performance environment (indicates the will to bring the work situation to a higher level, through for example better training of employees).

Role of the Programme manager:

- Facilitates the choice of the performance environment (especially during the kick-off and the intake), makes agreements / "contract" with the manager / principal and the participant (the so called performance environment contract).
- Facilitates the transfer from the learning environment to the performing environment at the participant / training level (during the intervention session).
- Facilitates the contact between the participant and the trainer / consultant for the generic block by participating in the last topic related performance situation of the participant.
- Facilitates / manages the first meeting with the consultant and the principal.

Role of the trainer / consultant:

- Facilitates the professionalization / improvement / development of the performance environment (this means the principal is the discussion partner for the whole performance environment and the focus is the topic related to the block of the trainer / consultant).