



Human Resource Development Initiatives in Large Japanese Companies: Coexistence of company-wide uniformity and individual response in the workplace

Japan, like other countries, is currently facing major environmental changes. Against this backdrop, companies are proceeding with corporate activities in an effort to successfully adapt to the new environment. This brief reports on some of the status of human resource development within Japanese companies in this context.

Company-wide level-specific education to date:

Many large Japanese companies have traditionally created and implemented a company-wide education system. Most company-wide education systems are designed to organize what kind of education to provide, to what level, and by what method.

The HR department, based on an understanding of the company-wide situation, establishes company-wide employee education issues and various themes necessary for the education of each level of employees. Education methods are then selected in line with each theme.

Level-specific education centered on such a company-wide training system has traditionally been implemented because it is seen as having several benefits, including:

1.

Share the strategy, the image of human resources required to realize the strategy, and company-wide efforts in human resource development.

2. Reform the organizational culture

Accelerate the creation of a corporate culture that nurtures people by promoting company-wide human resource development activities. Encourage the creation of an environment that promotes employee learning.

3. Improve employee performance

Improve problem-solving skills at each workplace, offer training by supervisors and employees, provide necessary support to young employees for their fast growth, and pass on know-how.

An important education program based on such a company-wide education system is the company-wide, level-specific training for each job level.

In the level-specific training, employees of the same level from across the company or from all divisions gather in a room, where training is conducted. For example, employees who are newly appointed to positions such as section chiefs or entry-level managers, or those who have been with the company for 10 years or other years, gather together to attend training sessions. The training has learning objectives for each level, and employees learn through

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One reason is to better link company-wide training with the execution of work in the workplace, by allowing employees to use the knowledge they have learned in company-wide level-specific training in the workplace. Employees are now expected to use the knowledge they gain from the company-wide level-specific training in the workplace and apply it to their actual work performance. Therefore, employees share what they have learned in the level-specific training with their managers at their workplace, discuss how to use the knowledge in their actual day



For example, when I recently asked about 25 section leaders at a company where I conducted a training course, whether they spend enough time talking with their subordinates, many participants responded that they actually spend less than half of what they consider to be the ideal amount of time talking with their subordinates. This is how little leaders and managers are able to spend time regularly and intentionally communicating with their subordinates. This is just one example of one company, but we have heard of similar occurrences in other Japanese companies.

This is why it is important in Japan these days for managers to regularly set aside time for individual discussions with members of the team. For example, managers should intentionally set aside time to meet with each member individually on a regular basis, even if only for a short period of time. By doing so, the manager can understand the work situation of each member, share issues for growth, and provide advice to support the member. This will also make it easier for managers themselves to manage their workplaces.

Combination of educational means

In addition to company-wide level-specific training and subordinate training by managers in the workplace, human resource development in organizations is now considered to include experience in other departments, rotations, and side jobs. Furthermore, as various technologies such as AI and online conference systems continue to evolve in Japan, these technologies are also being utilized as educational tools. How effective and efficient human resource development can be achieved by combining these various educational means is likely to be a challenge that Japanese companies will have to tackle in the future.

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