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**Training Principles Part 2: Specificity & Variety***By Scott Byorum, Nationwide Real Estate Tax Service, Inc.*

Training the body to produce athletic results requires a distinct disciplined approach common in all physical training programs. Each of these principles is practical, logical, and produces measurable results when followed. These same principles can be applied in training programs at banks, whether in teaching job functions, team-building, or communication training and customer service.

**Specificity**

Specificity refers to the similarity between a training activity and the application of that activity to a specific task. In physical training, a given exercise will have a very specific pattern of joint and muscle coordination, which will have its own relational effect to the demands of the body outside of the training session. Likewise with mental training, what is learned and absorbed in a training session will have its own relational impact to tasks that are demanded outside of that session.

Let's say you are a police officer and you take up jogging to keep in shape and "catch the bad guys." Jogging will go a long way to keeping you physically fit and will probably assist somewhat on the job. But jogging is an aerobic activity designed to build endurance. "Catching the bad guys" more than not involves shorter, more intense activity, like sprinting, which is an anaerobic exercise.

Likewise, the baseball pitcher that performs weightlifting curls to form upper body strength is not applying the principle of specificity to his training. Curls build the arm's biceps, but the activity of pitching relies almost exclusively on the arm's triceps.

When developing and implementing training programs to develop employees in the various tasks that financial institutions carry out, it is important to focus on training for performance. Specific training leads to specific results leads to specific impact on job related performance.

**Variety**

Variety in training has two purposes: 1) it develops the supporting structure of the specific primary task, and 2) it relieves boredom. Training in a specific task is often a prolonged activity, if maximum performance is desired, and there are usually other things that support the main task at hand. Training in these areas will increase overall performance and keep the activity of training fresh and interesting.

If we take our example of the police officer above, sprinting after bad guys is not the officer's only challenge to prepare for, physically. The officer will want to make sure that they have the upper body strength to subdue the suspect if they resist.

Likewise, the baseball pitcher performs other physical activities that support the primary task of pitching no-hitters. They need to run, catch, and bat just like everyone else on the team. Knowledge and ability in these areas increase job performance and make the pitcher that much more valuable.

As a comparison, a bank teller must not only be proficient with the tools used to accept, count, store, and retrieve client funds, they must also excel at the supportive knowledge and tasks of effective communication with clients and coworkers, issue resolution, various account types and bank offerings, etc. So there are a variety of things that combine and support the primary task of efficiently and accurately handling customer funds.

The human body adapts in highly specific ways in response to the type of physical fitness training imposed upon it. So does the mind. Training people in knowledge and activities that don't relate to or support their primary job function is wasteful, at best, and potentially harmful to overall performance. Trainers and trainees alike should ask themselves the following:

1. What training is necessary for my/their performance?
2. Why is this training necessary for my/their performance?
3. How will this training increase my/their performance?

Training programs support people physically and mentally and enhance their performance. Think about the training programs of your institution. Are your task training courses designed to build and measure application competency? Are your customer service programs one-shot, throw-away, feel-good sessions? To be a successful organization you need to think of your employees as athletes...athletes in need of solid and ongoing training programs that help them operate at peak performance so that everyone can share in the reward of that success.

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