EVALUATING THE EFFICACY: HOW SHOULD THE AIR FORCE CONTRACTING CAREER FIELD ASSESS ITS TRAINING METHODS

NPS · NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

PRAESTANTIA PER SCIENTIAM · 1909

Abstract

- This study addresses the gap in evaluating Air Force Contracting's initial skills training by exploring best practices from other Department of Defense (DoD) agencies and industry. Using a case study approach, it identifies techniques like competency mapping and outcome-based assessments to improve training evaluation. These methods offer actionable insights for developing standardized metrics, refining programs, and enhancing workforce readiness. Adopting these practices can ensure personnel are better prepared for mission-critical objectives, fostering a more capable contracting workforce and laying the groundwork for long-term training improvements.

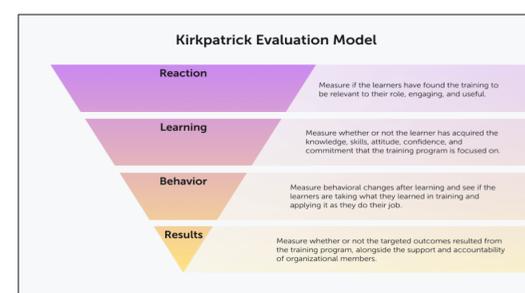|	Mission Ready Contracting Officer Course (MRC-103)	Defense Acquisition University (DAU)	Naval Postgraduate School (NPS)	Air Force Undergraduate RPA Training (URT)
Training Program Objectives	Same as DAU	Satisfy DAWIA Certification & NCMA standards	Provide defense-focused graduate education	Achieve basic aviation and RPA skills mandated by operational Air Force mission requirements
Measurement Criteria	First attempt score on CON 3990 certification exam	Course exam pass rates & post course satisfaction surveys	Satisfactory completion of coursework and assessments	Curriculum pass rates, graduating class sizes, and post curriculum satisfaction surveys
Data Collection Methods	Quantitative: Test scores & surveys	Quantitative: Course exam pass rates & Two (2) check-in surveys: at course completion and at 3-4 months post completion	Quantitative: Assessment scores and final course grades & Post course satisfaction survey	Quantitative: Grading tool that obtains and analyzes check ride performance data & Post curriculum surveys
Impact Assessment	Outperform DAU students in CON 3990 exam performance	Members are competent in satisfying DAWIA certification & applying NCMA standards	Track student pass/fail rates and grade distribution	Determine if candidates are competent in conducting all RPA skill sets and address persistent challenges
Feedback Mechanisms	End of module exams	Post Training Surveys using Likert Scale & Bloom Taxonomy Levels	End of course survey	End of Curriculum surveys for each skill set
Continuous Improvement	AFIT Faculty Development Councils stay current with what the field is requiring and bring that to students with curriculum updates	Curriculum updates from Headquarters & professionalization training for instructors	Curriculum updates from headquarters & expected to conduct to refresh course	Simulation upgrades via software from industry and check ride improvements
Challenges and Solutions	Not fully privy to student data from DAU, therefore, unable to understand where gaps in learning exist	Diverse workforce where all training does not meet individual organizational goals and objectives	Faculty aren't required to accumulate 2 consecutive years of continuous education training; continuity	Limited pool of qualified civilian instructors to maintain continuity
Technology and Tools	Canvas	Database system on members progression & net promoter score	PYTHON, SAKAI, Assessment Student Program	iPads and a collaborative tool that allows analytical review of candidate performance
Customization and Personalization	Incorporate Air Force specific requirements and examples in training	Implement more tailored training and workshops to add more robust training for the diverse contracting workforce	Instructors can customize to their desire within the competences set by the department	Each candidate has an individual profile tailored to their performance and areas of improvement

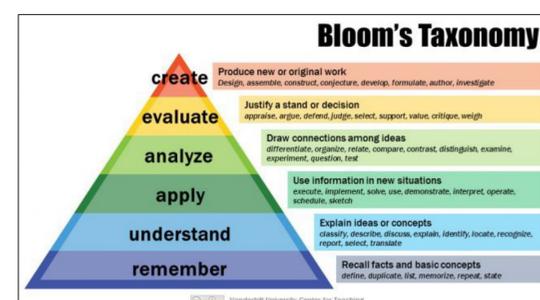*Table 2. Organization Comparison Table*

Methods

- **Case study approach:** Selected three U.S. government agencies to compare training methods and measure initial skills training effectiveness.

- **Semi-structured interviews:** Conducted with training managers and senior leadership to explore objectives, metrics, and frameworks for training.

- **Agencies studied:** Included Air Force URT (internal), DAU, and NPS (external), known for technical expertise and leadership development.

- **Nine topics explored:** Training objectives, metrics, feedback, challenges, tools, and customization to assess alignment with mission objectives.

- **Cross-agency analysis:** Examined training measurement methods to create a competency-based framework for Air Force Contracting improvement.

- **Industry analysis:** Examined approaches like Kirkpatrick's Model and Bloom's Taxonomy to gain a holistic view of training evaluation.

Recommendations & Their Impact

- **Comprehensive evaluation:** Use pre-assessments, module surveys, and post-training data to identify skill gaps and measure knowledge growth in MRC-103.
- **Framework integration:** Apply Bloom's Taxonomy to build contracting skills progressively and Kirkpatrick's Model to evaluate training outcomes at multiple levels.
- **Competency alignment:** Map CFETP Core tasks to lesson objectives, providing feedback and ensuring training directly supports contracting officer development.
- **Enhanced training clarity:** Structured processes enable progress tracking, fostering individual growth and organizational success for the career field.

Kirkpatrick Evaluation Model

Bloom's Taxonomy

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