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The Impact of Sales Forces Training Program to Employees Behaviour Styles (A Quasi-experimental Case Study In a Medium Sized Enterprise)

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the possibility of another positive impact of employee training program within a medium sized logistics and distribution service enterprise. Researches have shown that training programs have proven to be an effective way to boost company performance, in term of sales and financial perspectives. In term of behavioural perspective, view has shown that training has significant impact to modify employee behaviour styles. A quasi-experimental approach is used in this case study. Using a treatment group, as well as a control group, behaviour style of each respondent is analyzed using DiSC technique. The study shows that training has a permanent impact to employees' behaviour changing of the treatment group, while the control group shows no behavioural switching among the employees.

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1. Introduction

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Indonesia are very important for several reasons, such as their potential to create employment and to generate foreign currencies through exports. In fact, when the economic crisis hit Indonesia in 1997, SMEs were found to have been weathering the crisis better than Large Enterprises (LEs), even though many had been hit hard too. The SMEs greater flexibility had allowed them to adjust production process during the crisis and also because they are less dependent on imports, formal markets, and formal credits than LEs (Tambunan, 2006).

The Indonesian Ministry of Cooperative and Small and Medium Enterprises defines a medium enterprise as a business unit with an annual value of sales between IDR 2.5 billion (US\$ 250,000) and IDR 50 billion (US\$ 5 million), or a business unit with the total net assets more than IDR 500 million (US\$ 50,000) but not exceed IDR 10 billion (US\$ 1 million), excluding land and buildings (source: www.depkop.go.id).

The existent of SMEs are very important to Indonesia. Their significant roles are shown by their contributions to the national production, the total units of enterprises, and the creation of employment. In term of GDP, SMEs performed relatively better than LEs, as they accounted for 53.6% (compared to 46.4%) of total Indonesia's GDP during 2006-2007. According to The State Ministry of Cooperative and Small and Medium Enterprises, SMEs accounted for more than 49.4 million business units in 2007, and moved to 52.7 million units in 2009, or constituted approximately 99.9% of the total number of enterprises in Indonesia. In the employment point of view, the number of workers employed reached 96.2 million, representing about 97.3% of Indonesia's workforce (www.depkop.go.id).

Despite the fact that SMEs are very potential for building a stable economic growth, developing SMEs is a challenging issue. Many problems need to be addressed. The most common problems for SMEs are low quality of human resources, and lack of access to market, information, technology, and capital. Most SMEs do not understand what kind of products needed by market, how big the market, when the products are needed, and how to deliver the products. SMEs also have a weakness in bargaining power, especially in dealing with big buyers. Even if they understand the market, they sometimes find difficulties in raw material supply, both in the availability and supply (Rudjito & Nazirwan, 2003).

Low quality of human resources is not the only constraint for SMEs to grow, but it is considered as the main problem in developing SMEs. This problem is primarily caused by their limited access to formal education and training, resulting in lack of skills, particularly basic economic skills and managerial expertise. Such circumstance considerably influences their business management, so it is difficult for them to develop optimally. Moreover, with less qualified human resources, SMEs can hardly adopt the development of new technology to improve their product competitiveness. As affirmed by Kuncoro (2009), lack of managerial skill and poor human resource management practice had caused small business leaders to be less competitive in running their business.

The most recent study about HR Management Practice in Indonesian SMEs was conducted by Human Capital-Turner Indonesia in April – May 2009. The study found that most of the enterprises' budget is spent to develop employee skills and performance in doing work-related activities – training practices. The study shows that the most common training practices consist of: mentoring (50%), external training (19%), job enrichment (12%), apprenticeship (6%), and others (13%). The research also found that the main common problem of targeted samples is that the employees show significant increase in term of performance and productivity, but still lacked of team-work behaviour (Firdanianty, 2009).

In the beginning of year 1995, *American Management Association* (AMA) reported that there is a significant positive correlation between the increasing of companies' training budget and the increasing of companies' profits. At the similar year, New York Times reported that according to survey to 3,000 companies, conducted by United States' Bureau of Statistics and The University of Pennsylvania, the increasing of 10% of company investment in training has impacted to 8.6% increase in employees' productivity. As a comparison, moreover,

10% incensement in physical investment has only impacted to 3.4% incensement in employees' productivity (Gordon, 2002). This research outlines the positive impact of training program to organizational performance.

2. Research Background

The subject of analysis of this research is a local medium sized logistic and distribution service company. It was established in 2001. It operates specially in the field of sales and distribution of magazines and books, with net assets approximately reaches IDR 2.5 billion, and yearly revenue achieves IDR 5 billion. It handles logistic, sales and distribution functions for 18 clients, all of them are medium size publishing companies. Regularly, since 2001, once every two year in November, the company provides training program to its sales forces from seven branches in Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Semarang, Surabaya, Medan, and Makassar.

According to Company Report published on February 2010, the sales volume on magazine products has grown at 28% from last year, on the average. In similar, the geographical coverage has increased from 62% in the year of 2008 to 78% in 2009.

On the contrary, the development in sales volume and geographical coverage did not followed by the agents' satisfaction index. The report stated that agent satisfaction index is decreasing, from 8.2 in 2008 to 6.5 in 2009 (on the scale of 10).

The decreasing level of agents' satisfaction index is considered as a major issue to the company, since agents are the main actors in sales and distribution system. For the record, Company sales and distribution system involves a total of 61 agents and 801 sub agents all over Indonesia. The last survey conducted by the company explained that 67% of the agents felt that sales person tend to be more individual from year to year. They lack of team work, compared to what they have shown in the previous year. Moreover, the agents stated that the sales persons tend to take over other people's coverage area, so they even saw some sales persons arguing each other in front of them.

According to the company, the main objective of the sales force training program is to increase the skills of the sales forces (selling skills, mapping skills, and improvement of team work behaviour within sales team). Among this three targeted skills, the last one is considered not achieved. This behavioural changing is considered alarming.

3. Research Questions and Objectives

Noe (2002) states that the changing style from team worker to individual worker is a behavioral problem. Furthermore, he suggests that every training program should be evaluated through the behavioral assessment phase, in order to see whether the intended behavior is achieved. Therefore, the primary discussion in this research will cover several issues: Is the sales forces training program in the company effective, in term of developing sales forces behavior to be team work oriented persons? Is the changing of behavior, if any, mainly affected by the sales forces training program?

The research objectives of this research can be stated as: to evaluate the effectiveness of the company sales forces training program, in term of behavioral aspect; and to evaluate whether the changing of behavior, if any, among sales forces trainees of the company is mainly because of sales forces training program itself.

A determination that the sales force training program implemented has indeed achieved its purpose may be a good reason to continue with the program and implement it in other areas that are opening in the future as well.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1. Training evaluation: basic concepts

Goldstein (1993) defines training evaluation as a process to collect information systematically, whether it's descriptive information or judgmental information. The aim is to help managers to be more objective in decision making process. Noe (2002) states that training evaluation procedure is a process to collect outputs needed by a decision maker to examine the effectiveness of a training program. Kirkpatrick (2006) explains that training evaluation procedure can be distinguished into four level of criterion (i.e., the four-level framework). It consists of: reaction, learning, behavior, and results. Reaction is defined as how trainees react to the training program. Learning evaluation is defined as step to understand trainees' knowledge of the material being trained. Behavior evaluation is defined as a process to uncover trainees' behavioral changes after the training. Result evaluation is defined as a tool to describe how much (in term of money) the training program can contribute to company performance.

Training experts and academics, suggest that a more comprehensive evaluation criterion is needed, in order to describe monetary return on investment. Noe, 2002; Lilly, 2001; Fitz-enz, 2000; Phillips, 1997; suggest another criterion, the return on investment (ROI) as monetary evaluation. Systematically, evaluation phases can be structured to the following levels:

Table 1. Training Evaluation Levels

Evaluation levels	Objectives	Methods	Advantages/Disadvantages
Reaction (and planned action)	Participant's reaction and satisfaction to the content and delivery of training.	Participant's complete evaluation forms and/or develop action plans for implementing new knowledge.	Subjective but has some usefulness. If follow-up is scheduled, participant's action plans will be more realistic.
Learning	Skills, knowledge or attitude changes as a result of training program.	Tests via paper and pencil or computerized format.	Tests must be assessed for validity and reliability.
Behavior	Changes in behavior on the job as a result of training, as expected.	Performance reviews and observations. Behavioral assessment techniques.	Assumption is that if the behavior is changing, results will follow.
Results	Impact of training on business activities and processes.	Cost reduction, productivity increases, improved quality, reduced labor hours, decreased production / processing time, etc.	Critical tasks are isolating the effects of training and capturing appropriate data.
Return on Investment (ROI)	Compares the costs of the training program with monetary results and is usually expressed as a percentage.	Detailed, comprehensive data collection and analysis of costs & benefits. Accounting expertise helpful. Time value of money is a factor.	The most comprehensive and objective evaluation technique, but the process can be very costly and time consuming.

Source: Lily (2001)

In term of behavioral evaluation, several reliable tools can be adopted, such as: Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and DiSC[®], and also coaching and mentoring, self-reflection, and multi-rater (360-degree) feedback (McLean, 2006).

4.2. Design of experiment

Design of experiment is procedures that enable a researcher to control and ensure that the changes in dependent variables correlated with the change in independent variables (Neuman, 2006). The effect of training can be observed by controlling the unobserved heterogeneity and potential endogeneity (Nadeem, 2010). Moreover, Noe (2002) developed several possibilities that might be adopted to conduct experimental research in training related problem.

Table 2. Design of experiment for training related problem

Design	Measured Group	Measurement				
		Pretest	Posttest	Cost	Time	Accuracy
<i>Posttest-only</i>	Experimental Group	No	Yes	Low	Fast	Low
<i>Pretest/posttest</i>	Experimental Group	Yes	Yes	Low	Fast	Low
<i>Posttest-only Comparison group</i>	Experimental and Control Group	No	Yes	Medium	Medium	Medium
<i>Pretest/posttest Comparison group</i>	Experimental and Control Group	Yes	Yes	Medium	Medium	High
<i>Time Series</i>	Experimental Group	Yes	Yes	Medium	Medium	Medium
<i>Time Series Comparison group</i>	Experimental and Control Group	Yes	Yes	High	Medium	High
<i>Solomon four-group</i>	Experimental Gr. A	Yes	Yes	High	Long	High
	Experimental Gr. B	No	Yes			
	Control Gr. A	Yes	Yes			
	Control Gr. B	No	Yes			

Source: Noe (2002)

Sometimes it is difficult to control the randomness of respondents when assigned to both the treatment group and the control group. Any experimental designs which are lacked of random assignment are referred as having quasi-experimental design (Neuman, 2006).

4.3. Review to previous studies

Many researches describe the relationship between training and its impact to behavior. Richardson (2011) indicated that there is a statistically significant increase in individual song-writing knowledge and self-efficacy as impacts of song-writing training. Another research conducted by Staples (2009) showed that there are significant relationships between training reactions, commitment to change and volunteering behavior within individual perspective.

In group-training perspective, many researches showed that training has proved not to affect the behavior of the trainees. Saling (2005) found that there were no significant differences in the group relationship after the training has been implemented. Another research conducted by Anderson (2008) pointed out that there are no significant increases in dimensions of group behavior after training and simulation have been conducted. Moreover, Graham (2009) described that there is no strong evidence whether the ethics training sessions are adequate to encourage ethical behavior at work.

In contrast, several in-depth researches showed that training treatments have the ability to affect employees' behavior. Fouch (2006) indicated that trained group demonstrated a significant decrease in violent behavior, while the other untrained group was still remained the same. Chang (2005) revealed that there were significant

behavior changes between the treatment and control groups after the intervention during patients feeding skills training program in nursing homes.

Fine quality research papers with topic aim at evaluating the training effectiveness to Indonesian SMEs as subjects are considered infrequent. No single research paper found describing the specific study about how training impacted the behavior of its trainees using experiment or quasi-experiment. Therefore, this paper tries to explore the training impact on employee behavior, with consideration that training program places a significant investment for most of Indonesian SMEs human resource activities, so that every training program should be able to conform to the needs of organizations (Firdanianty, 2009). Another originality of the research is that DiSC technique is used to evaluate the behavior styles of the respondents.

5. Research Design

5.1. Methods

In this study, individual behavior research was conducted. The expected result would hopefully show the difference in sales force behavior styles. The training program consisted of classroom training and field training, and finalized with a meditation day. A modification of training material was conducted. More team works sessions were added to the program, especially in the field training sessions. The steps in this study were as followed:

1. Respondent Demographic. Through descriptive statistic, respondents profile such as age, gender, and education level were analyzed to give brief exploratory research concerning the respondents.
2. Data Analysis: Pretest and Posttest. Behavioral profile on every sales person was collected before the training program was conducted. In this research, the researcher used DiSC[®] assessment tool to analyze the behavior styles of the trainees. The DiSC technique is cheap and efficient, in term of instrument cost and time. The level of accuracy is also high (91%). Another reason is that one of the researchers is a certified DiSC assessor, so the interpretation outcome would be reliable. After the treatment group experienced the training sessions, both the treatment and control groups were re-analyzed using the same DiSC technique.
3. Isolating the effect of training. In this study, pretest/posttest with comparison group was employed. Comparison group acted as control group, to see whether the changing of behavior is mainly because of the training program. This control group would not be involved in the November 2010 sales forces training program. Neuman (2006) states that control group is important to isolate the effect of treatment and eliminate alternative explanations.
4. Data re-analysis. This step was provided to make sure that the behavioral changing, if any, is not temporally. This step conducted six month after the training sessions. The same DiSC assessment tool was employed. During the six months real-implementation period, all the members of the treatment group were mixed equally. They were asked to work together in several sales force teams to develop more sales volume, as well as to expand the geographical coverage. No additional commission portion was provided.

5.2. Sampling Design

As a medium sized enterprise, the subject of analysis has 240 sales persons, distributed to seven branches. Jakarta Branch has the most sales force (72 sales persons), since it covers Jabodetabek, Banten, and Lampung areas. In this study, Jakarta Branch would be the subject of the research.

Each sales person must at least have been working in this company for four years. It is to make sure that the person has involved in 2006 and 2008 training program, and have the basic ability to perform well as sales

persons. In this case, 18 sales people were excluded because they have been in the company for less than four years. The number of possible sales persons to be respondents was 54.

The sales forces were divided into two groups, the experimental group and the control group; each has the same number of peoples of 27. The experimental group was involved in the November 2010 training program, while the control group received no treatment.

5.3. *Source of Data*

Data source for this research consists of primary data and secondary data. Primary data sources for this research were the results of standard DiSC questionnaires distributed among the 54 sales forces. Secondary data reflected by company report.

5.4. *Data Analysis*

This study gathered data on behavioral profiles, before the training program conducted (from 21 October 2010 – 30 October 2010), and after the training program has been conducted (01 December 2010 – 11 December 2010).

Behavioral profiles were compared between the experimental group and the control group, before and after the training program. The training program itself was conducted from 01 November 2010 – 22 November 2010). Further analysis was conducted six months after the training sessions had ended (18 May 2011 – 21 May 2011) to find out whether the training impact was temporally or permanent.

No exact number is stated about to which level it is assumed that a training program has impacts on people's behavioral changes, since we are dealing with human life. However, many Certified Analysts agree that if more than 30% respondents experienced their behavioral changing, then it is to be likely that the treatment has a significant effect to the respondents' behavior.

6. **Research Findings and Analysis**

6.1. *Respondents Demographic*

An analysis of the demographic of the respondents revealed that they were 100% male. The age was ranged between 25-41 years old. In term of education, all of them were senior high school graduates (100%). All of them have worked in the same branch for at least four consecutive years.

6.2. *The Pretest and Posttest*

The results of pretest and posttest sessions were in form of behavioral profiles on every sales person before and after the training program conducted. Table 3 shows the pretest/posttest behavioral style for the treatment and control groups.

In the treatment group (respondent 1-27), it is seen that only two trainees experienced no changes in behavioral style. It means that 92.6% of the trainees were changing in their behavioral style. The interesting fact was that 100% of the 92.6% trainees, who were experiencing their behavioral changing, have an "S" factor in their behavioral profile. The "S" represents a socialization ability factor, which means that a person who has an "S" factor in his/her behavioral profile is more likely to put his/herself as a team member. In other words, he/she has the ability to work in a team, and likes to be in a team. In common sense, if 100% trainees have the "S" factor, it is clear that the training had an impact on the changing of behavioral style of the trainees. Another fact was that there were only three sales persons in the treatment group have the "S" factor before the training

sessions began.

In the control group (respondent 28-54), it is seen that 25 sales persons (out of 27 sales persons) experienced no changes in their behavioral styles. It means that 92.6% members of the control group experienced no behavioral changing. Since no more than 30% of the control group members were changed in their behavioral styles (only 7.4%), it is found that the training program, as well as other conditions, were not affecting the control group.

Table 3. Pretest and Posttest for Treatment Group and Control Group

Respondent	Before	After	Behavioral style	Respondent	Before	After	Behavioral style
1	I	IS	Changed	28	D	D	Not Changed
2	IC	ISC	Changed	29	I	I	Not Changed
3	CD	CS	Changed	30	I	I	Not Changed
4	D	DS	Changed	31	IS	IS	Not Changed
5	I	SI	Changed	32	I	I	Not Changed
6	ID	IDS	Changed	33	I	I	Not Changed
7	IC	ISC	Changed	34	IS	IS	Not Changed
8	ID	IS	Changed	35	C	C	Not Changed
9	DI	DIS	Changed	36	DI	DI	Not Changed
10	DI	DSI	Changed	37	I	I	Not Changed
11	DI	DI	Not Changed	38	ID	ID	Not Changed
12	DIC	DS	Changed	39	I	I	Not Changed
13	ISC	IS	Changed	40	ID	ID	Not Changed
14	CI	CSI	Changed	41	ISC	IS	Changed, minor
15	IS	ISC	Changed	42	CDI	CDI	Not Changed
16	IC	ISC	Changed	43	DI	DI	Not Changed
17	D	DS	Changed	44	I	I	Not Changed
18	DI	DS	Changed	45	I	I	Not Changed
19	D	DS	Changed	46	I	I	Not Changed
20	ID	IS	Changed	47	DC	DC	Not Changed
21	I	IS	Changed	48	SC	SC	Not Changed
22	I	IS	Changed	49	C	C	Not Changed
23	SI	SI	Not Changed	50	C	CS	Changed, minor
24	C	CS	Changed	51	I	I	Not Changed
25	CI	SCI	Changed	52	ID	ID	Not Changed
26	CD	SC	Changed	53	IC	IC	Not Changed
27	D	DS	Changed	54	IC	IC	Not Changed

6.3. The Six-month Posttest

Six months after the training program ended, all the respondents in the treatment group and the control group were re-analyzed using the same DiSC technique. The researcher was also using the same questions for the questionnaire. This phase is needed to find out whether the training program has a temporally impact on the behavior changing, or it is permanent.

The study found that there was one respondent has experienced a change in behavioral style, from DI to IS. It is considered as positive change, since the objective of the company is to increase the “S” factor among the sales forces. It is seen that the training program has a permanent impact on the overall sales forces behavioral changing. Interestingly, no behavioral changing appeared among the members of the control group. It is more likely to happen because they worked in different groups then the treatment ones.

The impact of training can be evaluate by comparing the behaviour style of each employee prior and after the training program has been held. To understand whether or not the impact of training has permanent impact, post treatment should be conducted (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). This study found that during the six

month period of training implementation (i.e., post treatment period), 26 of 27 employees in the treatment group who have the “S” factor have not experienced any changes in their behaviour styles (table 4). One employee has changed from DI to IS, which lead to the finding that after six month training implementation period, all employees have the “S” factor, as previously expected by the training program as the main objective.

Table 4. Six Months Posttest for Treatment Group and Control Group

Respondent	After Training	After 6 Months	Behavioral style	Respondent	After Training	After 6 Months	Behavioral style
1	IS	IS	Not changed	28	D	D	Not Changed
2	ISC	ISC	Not changed	29	I	I	Not Changed
3	CS	CS	Not changed	30	I	I	Not Changed
4	DS	DS	Not changed	31	IS	IS	Not Changed
5	SI	SI	Not changed	32	I	I	Not Changed
6	IDS	IDS	Not changed	33	I	I	Not Changed
7	ISC	ISC	Not changed	34	IS	IS	Not Changed
8	IS	IS	Not changed	35	C	C	Not Changed
9	DIS	DIS	Not changed	36	DI	DI	Not Changed
10	DSI	DSI	Not changed	37	I	I	Not Changed
11	DI	IS	Changed	38	ID	ID	Not Changed
12	DS	DS	Not changed	39	I	I	Not Changed
13	IS	IS	Not changed	40	ID	ID	Not Changed
14	CSI	CSI	Not changed	41	IS	IS	Not Changed
15	ISC	ISC	Not changed	42	CDI	CDI	Not Changed
16	ISC	ISC	Not changed	43	DI	DI	Not Changed
17	DS	DS	Not changed	44	I	I	Not Changed
18	DS	DS	Not changed	45	I	I	Not Changed
19	DS	DS	Not changed	46	I	I	Not Changed
20	IS	IS	Not changed	47	DC	DC	Not Changed
21	IS	IS	Not changed	48	SC	SC	Not Changed
22	IS	IS	Not changed	49	C	C	Not Changed
23	SI	SI	Not changed	50	CS	CS	Not Changed
24	CS	CS	Not changed	51	I	I	Not Changed
25	SCI	SCI	Not changed	52	ID	ID	Not Changed
26	SC	SC	Not changed	53	IC	IC	Not Changed
27	DS	DS	Not changed	54	IC	IC	Not Changed

7. Conclusion

This study has found some interesting points. The sales forces training program at the company was proven to be effective, in term of to increase and develop the “S” factor among the sales forces. The “S” factor, according to DiSC technique used in this study, is the socialization ability factor which is needed by a person to be able to work in a team. After 6 months in the real implementation period, 100% of the sales forces members were having the “S” factor. The changing of behavior styles among the sales forces trainee were mainly affected by the training program itself. The member of the control group, as the comparison group which was not experienced any training treatment, have no significant behavioral changes, even after the six months period of real-implementation working experience.

The important factor to be considered by the company is the material of training program. It is suggested that the company gives more effort to develop a comprehensive training material and methods; therefore, the cost of the training will meet its value.

For further research, it is necessary to find out the outcomes of behavioral pattern in different six months real-implementation period treatment while both the treatment and control groups are mixed to work in teams. Which behavioral style is stronger to affecting the others would be also valuable to find out.

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