



Training Job Feature

## A Career as a Training Specialist

By Douglas May

**Training and development specialists are pivotal in planning and conducting employee training and development programs. As technological and economic shifts affect the workplace, training specialists have become vital in maintaining a strong and productive staff.**



Management has increasingly recognized the need for employees to develop skills, enhance productivity and quality, and build company loyalty. Training specialists develop programs that provide all three. As the work environment has become

increasingly complex and the pace of technological change is so rapid, training has become an essential tool for helping employees stay abreast of the myriad changes.

In addition to assessing employee needs and arranging training, a training specialist may also deal with corporate requests, conduct employee surveys, or run orientation sessions. Training managers can also be critical during times of transition due to technological advances or company mergers.

Training specialists usually fill a variety of positions, and they may be called upon to run corporate training schools or apprenticeship programs. In some instances training specialists work within companies to help identify employees with the potential to hold leadership positions, ensuring that replacements are equipped with enough knowledge and skills when an executive leaves the company or retires. A training specialist may also work with upper management to help them hone their skills in dealing with employees.

Training and development specialists must be able to work well with individuals as well as work toward the goals of the organization. A number of different skills come into play to be an effective training specialist. Training specialists must be good communicators, both verbal and written. They must be comfortable working with people from a broad range of cultural backgrounds as the workforce has become increasingly diverse. They must be good mediators in reconciling conflicting ideas and opinions and generally work under high pressure. A training specialist must also have the

ability to maintain fair-mindedness and possess an affable and persuasive personality.

Training and development specialists can have a wide range of educational backgrounds. For entry-level positions employers usually look for candidates with bachelor's degrees in human resources, personnel administration, or industrial and labor relations. Other employers prefer candidates with bachelor's degrees in technical or business fields, while still others favor a well-rounded liberal arts education. There are many college courses geared to a career as a training and development specialist in the departments of business administration, education, instructional technology, organizational development, human services, communications, and public administration.

A broad assortment of courses is recommended in the social sciences, business, and behavioral sciences, although some jobs require a specialized background in engineering, science, finance, or law. If you're seeking advancement to top management positions, a master's degree in human resources, labor relations, or business administration might help you achieve your goal.

In 2006 training and development specialists earned a median annual salary of \$42,800. Salaries ranged from the lowest 10%, who earned less than \$24,760, to the highest 10%, who made more than \$72,530. The following list shows the median annual salaries for the industries employing the highest numbers of training and development specialists:

- Management of companies and enterprises — \$49,660
- Insurance carriers — \$45,830
- Local government — \$43,740
- State government — \$40,960
- Federal government — \$37,560

In 2006 training and development specialists held approximately 209,000 jobs. Between 2006 and 2012, the



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number of training and development specialists is expected to increase faster than average, mostly due to increasing importance being attached to employee development by companies and other organizations. A career as a training and development specialist is increasingly becoming a strong

choice for many as the demands for higher standards in the workplace rise due to technological advances, international human resource management, and expanded informational systems.

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