

**PASS IT ON**

**PUTTING ON-THE-JOB TRAINING  
TO WORK IN YOUR COMPANY**



**people in print**





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## WHO WE ARE

The Canadian Printing Industries Sector Council (CPISC) is a national forum that collaborates with printing and graphic communications industry employers, employees, educators, suppliers and representatives of governments to create and implement innovative strategies for skills development and progressive HR management practices. In doing so, CPISC enables all key players in the printing and graphic communications industry to work together in partnership to improve the quality of the industry's current and future workforce.

Through the completion of its national Skill Standards and three watershed reports—the Skills and Technology Roadmap, *Charting Our Course*; the HR Study, *An Industry Redefined*; and the Training Needs Assessment, *Bridging the Gaps*—CPISC has built a solid foundation and understanding of what the industry needs. Moving forward, CPISC is building on those findings and evolving from a research-based organization into one that also offers services, tools, programs and resources to maximize the career potential of every employee and support the industry's prosperity.

CPISC has identified four key long-term objectives in its 2010-2013 Strategic Plan. These objectives describe the behaviours that the organization would like to influence and see exhibited by the industry in the coming years. The industry will become one that:

- has skilled workers with transferable skills;
- retains existing workers and recruits new workers;
- adopts strategic HR management and best practices; and
- takes coordinated action on common HR issues.

To achieve these objectives, CPISC is focusing on goals and activities in four key areas: skills, training, career pathways and HR management, which includes providing timely and informative data on the industry.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CPISC wishes to express its sincere appreciation to all those who contributed, directly or indirectly, to this project; and more specifically, thank members of the Project Working Group, who provided direction to the project. Made up of representatives from printing companies, suppliers, educators, training institutions and unions, the members of the Project Working Group include: Gerry Federow (Chair), Mike Drimmie, Louis DuPerron, Doug Lewis, Roger Holmes, Mark Menzies, Jeff Polley, Tim Trainor and Mike Yez.



## SKILLS AT WORK

*Skills at Work* is a suite of five tools to help the industry implement the national Skill Standards in the workplace.

Developed with industry stakeholders, the guides and tools included in the *Skills at Work* suite enable employers and employees in the industry to use the Skill Standards on the job to assess skills, identify gaps and ultimately develop an on-the-job training strategy to ensure employees have the skills they need to thrive. The *Skills at Work* suite includes the following components:

- ◆ ***Growing Your Company's Talent*** is a guide for employers that introduces the concept of Skill Standards and sets out the ideal process for using CPISC's Skill Standards to assess skill sets, identify gaps and establish a plan to fill those gaps.
- ◆ ***Building Your Skills*** is the companion guide for employees that introduces the concept of Skill Standards, the many benefits of qualifying to the standards, and the process to assess skill sets, identify gaps and establish a plan to fill those gaps.
- ◆ ***Skills Assessment Checklist*** presents the national Skill Standards with a rating scale for use by supervisors to assess employees' levels of competence and employees to conduct self-assessments. A checklist has been developed for each occupation for which national Skill Standards have been created.

◆ ***Pass It On*** is a guide to implementing on-the-job training company-wide. It helps facilitate the transfer of knowledge from peer-to-peer. It describes methods and best practices by which experienced, highly skilled supervisors and co-workers can serve as trainers to individual employees.

◆ ***Training Tracker*** is a document that enables employers and employees alike to record ongoing in-house training and skills development. A Training Tracker is available for each occupation for which Skill Standards have been developed.

These tools, which have been developed for the industry by the industry, strive to ensure that the printing and graphic communications sector has skilled workers with transferable skills.

## TRAINING IN TIMES OF TRANSITION

Whenever the economy is tight, owners and operators of businesses can be tempted to scale back on their plans to train employees to critical new levels of knowledge and skill. Training, like marketing and communications, is often an early victim of corporate belt tightening, for it is arguably not immediately connected to making money—at least in the short-term.

Yet seasoned entrepreneurs know that recession and recovery are cyclical events; maintaining a workforce that learns and develops can have a major impact on the rate of growth when conditions improve. Nowhere is this truer than in Canada's printing and graphic communications industry, where the rapid evolution of customer needs, markets and technologies has made owners keenly aware of the fact that one's people are indeed one's best asset.

A former president of the Graphic Arts Technical Foundation (GATF) observed: *"When I look at the companies that survive and were resilient, even in the downturns, they made sure their people were up to date on technology, change and opportunities. Myopic companies hunkered down and got smaller, and now a lot of them aren't even around anymore."*<sup>1</sup>

A well-known solution to the challenge of making continuous learning both doable and affordable is on-the-job training. The benefits are many: a company can save both tuition and travel costs, employees can be trained by existing staff during otherwise quiet moments, and training can be wholly focused on the practical functions at which a printing or graphics firm must excel to prosper. Importantly, by pursuing such training even during tough times, management can show high expectation of and regard for its employees.

Continued investment to upgrade workers' skills has other benefits: the workforce as a whole becomes more capable and talented, workers who are cross-trained develop a broader understanding of workflow and business processes and are better equipped to make better decisions, and multi-skilled workers can move quickly from task to task, making it easier for companies to manage temporary absences or peaks in demand in one area.

CPISC recently reviewed the training gaps and needs of the printing and graphic communications industry, outlining its findings in a Training Needs Assessment Report. The report was written in full recognition that

no training-delivery model can address the diverse training requirements of such a rapidly changing industry as ours. Indeed, **Pass It On** and the associated **Training Tracker**<sup>2</sup> are tools created in the wake of that report precisely to support a wide range of training activities in an endlessly varied set of corporate circumstances.

When used in conjunction, **Pass It On** and the **Training Tracker** will help you develop a training plan that addresses critical skill gaps in your company with all the advantages that an on-the-job training program can offer. Rooted in the national Skill Standards developed by the industry itself, **Pass It On** will lead into CPISC's forthcoming Certification program, allowing employees who meet the Skill Standards to be nationally recognized.

1. Freeman, S.F and Rothen, S. *Success Under Adversity: Differentiating Leaders from Laggards During Hard Times in the Printing Industry*. Printing Industry Center at Rochester Institute of Technology, 2006.
2. To download the *Training Tracker*, visit [www.cpisc-csic.ca](http://www.cpisc-csic.ca).

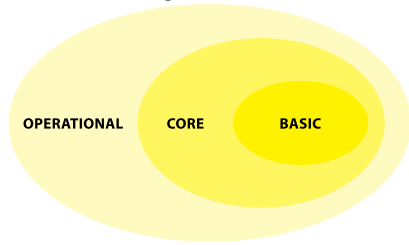
## IT ALL STARTS WITH SKILL STANDARDS

Skill Standards define the skills and knowledge employees need to succeed. Developed for occupations in prepress, press, bindery, finishing and production support so far, Skill Standards take into account the uniqueness of your organization—the size of your company, the products and services you sell, the equipment you use and the range of job positions you fill.

Available on CPISC's website ([www.cpisc-csic.ca](http://www.cpisc-csic.ca)), the Skill Standards include the basic, core and operating skills that define what tasks employees need to fulfil their specific job responsibilities.

The eight **basic skills** are essential in every occupation, in every industry.

They enable people to understand their responsibilities, and to communicate, cooperate and solve problems. They are also called enabling skills because they make it possible for workers to use and develop other skills. **Core skills** cover those



elements that give workers a broad-based knowledge of the industry. For the most part, these core skills span multiple process areas, although some may be more relevant to particular areas. **Operating skills** relate to specific operating functions within a process area. A function is defined as a set of related work activities organized in either chronological or operational order that often span multiple occupations.

This guide will help you prioritize the core and operating skills gaps that impact your business, and develop strategies to address them through on-the-job training.

One of the hallmarks of a high-performance workplace is one that enables all workers to upgrade their skills.

*High-performance workplaces: HR Study Issue Paper 2, accessed online at [http://www.cpisc-csic.ca/eng/pdf/HRstudy\\_P2\\_high\\_performance.pdf](http://www.cpisc-csic.ca/eng/pdf/HRstudy_P2_high_performance.pdf).*

A recent US study found that US industry members that emerged as profit leaders during economic lulls were those that provided training to their workforce.

*"Economic Crisis Impacts Employee Engagement", online article dated January 14, 2009 in Globe and Mail: Report on Business.*

Ninety percent of training in the Canadian printing industry is conducted employee to employee.

*Charting Our Course: A Skills and Technology Roadmap for the Canadian Printing and Graphics Communications Industry, accessed online at <http://www.cpisc-csic.ca/eng/pdf/STRME.pdf>.*

## EVALUATE YOUR TRAINING ROI

Return on investment (ROI) is a measure of the monetary benefits obtained by an organization over a specified time period in return for a given investment in a training program. Looking at it another way, ROI is the extent to which the benefits (outputs) of training exceed the costs (inputs). ROI can be used both to justify a planned investment and to evaluate the extent to which the desired return was achieved. Ensuring you have clear and measurable objectives is the first step to evaluating the ROI for on-the-job training. Use your objectives to develop a clear business case for delivering on-the-job training. Taking the time to develop a business case for training will help ensure the training:

- fits the mission and vision of the company;
- fits with existing and planned business strategies; and
- minimizes risks.

*For more information on building a business case for training, consult CPISC's HR Toolkit at [www.printHRtoolkit.ca](http://www.printHRtoolkit.ca)*



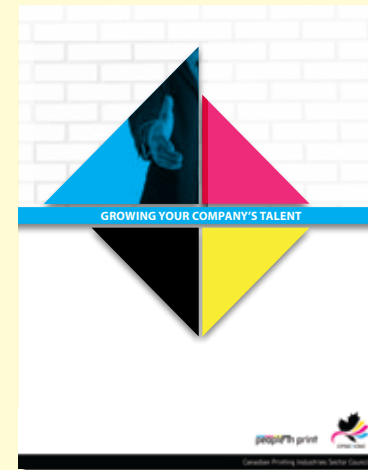
## ON-THE-JOB TRAINING: STEP-BY-STEP

On-the-job training works best when it addresses identified gaps in knowledge and skill. A structured on-the-job training program is one of the most efficient and effective ways to ensure employees have the skills necessary to thrive in an ever-changing industry. Structured on-the-job training uses experienced and highly skilled employees (often supervisors and co-workers) to help train newer or less skilled employees based on a standardized checklist of tasks.

### STEP 1: ASSESS THE NEED

The best focus of on-the-job training are those gaps in technical knowledge and skills that prevent your employees from carrying out their tasks well. Each company is unique and every employee is different, so taking the time to do this thoroughly will pay great dividends. As on-the-job training will take a significant commitment from staff, use an assessment phase to identify your priority training needs and focus on them first.

While this process is best when carried out for each individual, it need not be subjective. No matter the size or specialty of your company, the easiest and most consistent way to find gaps in knowledge and skill is to review the national Skill Standards for each occupation in each relevant process area. Once you've downloaded the Skill Standards that apply, use CPISC's **Skills Assessment Checklists** to rate, plan, monitor and document employee performance and progress. Each of the checklists looks at basic, core, and operating skills.



Download **Growing Your Company's Talent** at [www.cpisc-csic.ca](http://www.cpisc-csic.ca) to learn more about assessing your employees' current skills.

At Friesens Corporation, Abe Giesbrecht (Training Coordinator & Safety Officer) has been working with the management team for several years to identify the most important training gaps and then address them through structured on-the-job training. According to Abe:

*"Managers are starting to take the skills assessment process one step further. They are introducing annual tests to assess what their operators know. Our company then develops training and plans based on that information. This approach helps us (Friesens) identify the most critical skills gaps and address them, and continue to be a profitable business."*

## STEP 2: CHOOSE YOUR ON-THE-JOB TRAINERS

When you think back to school, it's easy to remember what a difference a great teacher can make to the experience of learning. Some are well suited to the task, others not so much. One thing is certain: those who love to teach do so best. Keep that in mind as you identify who in your organization might take on the role.

Even in small companies, there is often a choice; it doesn't necessarily have to be the owner. To guide your selection, keep five principles in mind.

### 1. Trainers should be highly skilled in the job.

Training is faster when those with the most knowledge and experience are chosen to impart it. Highly skilled trainers can listen to questions, understand where those questions come from, then refocus them on critical learning points. They can offer the most important information and guidance in the shortest amount of time, thus ensuring that learning is practical and swift. Trainers should be well versed in the Skill Standards for the occupation they are training for—you can download copies of the Skill Standards at [www.cpisc-csic.ca](http://www.cpisc-csic.ca).

### 2. Trainers should be willing to share.

Being talented, experienced and knowledgeable isn't enough. Just like schoolteachers, the best trainers have a deep desire to share what they know. They work hard to find ways to impart their wisdom with the greatest impact. Some employees are simply not interested—either by personality or preference—in training others. Some may think of additional training responsibilities as an unwelcome burden. Consider a few candidates for training roles and ask them how they feel about the possibility. If they have deep objections, they wouldn't likely excel in the role anyway.

### 3. Trainers should be available to train.

There are both benefits and costs of taking your best people out of production to conduct training. Don't choose people who are legitimately too busy to make an ongoing commitment. Depending on how busy your operation is, they may need to cancel or shorten certain training sessions on short notice, or feel compelled to interrupt frequently to keep their eyes on the shop floor. Even if willing, they may not be able to live up to their

training commitment, even though initially enthusiastic. Choose carefully to strike the right balance of suitability and availability.

### 4. Trainers should have the respect of their co-workers.

Trainers may have to deal with resistance to training—from younger employees who may be nervous about revealing their ignorance, and from more experienced employees who may for a time wonder why their contribution is thought to be less than ideal. Great training has great benefits, and that message will be best heard if the messenger is someone whose opinion and approach is widely admired by peers.

### 5. Trainers should be skilled communicators.

Even when simply showing others how to operate machinery, trainers will have a lot of explaining to do. To do so well, they must have a solid command of the specialized vocabulary of their trade and occupation. They must be able to answer questions in ways that make sense to those who are learning; often, this involves comparing desired actions and outcomes with others, giving helpful examples, and sometimes using classic tools of teaching such as analogy. If the trainers you choose are comfortable and articulate when they speak to others, the training will be more successful.

CPIPC is currently in the process of developing a Certification Program for all occupations for which Skill Standards have been developed. Having your trainers certified by CPIPC will ensure they have the right skills to pass along to those they help teach. Visit [www.cpisc-csic.ca](http://www.cpisc-csic.ca) to keep in the loop about the upcoming Certification Program.

### STEP 3: DRAFT A TRAINING PLAN WITH LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Once you know who is to be trained, what needs to be learned and who the trainer will be, you can get down to figuring out how to go about it. Together, each trainer-and-trainee pair should develop a plan with clear learning objectives. These learning objectives should be specific. They should use words that describe what the employee will be able to do once the training is complete.

So while “Cutter Set-up” is a function for which skill training may be needed, a specific learning objective would better be phrased as “Set up cutter based on project specifications.” Similarly, while “Chemical safety” is a general term for an area in which technical knowledge may be required, “Use chemicals and solvents safely and in accordance with company policy, manufacturers’ requirements and health and safety regulations” better describes the specific demonstration of that knowledge an employee should be able to make once trained. Clear and specific learning objectives help ensure the success of an on-the-job training program by leaving trainees and trainers alike no doubt about what they are working to achieve.

Learning objectives must also be measurable, so that success can be determined by objective means rather than subjective means. So while “Be able to open graphics files with appropriate software” may be specific, it is not measurable, whereas “Be able to open graphics files with Adobe Acrobat, Adobe Illustrator, Pixelmator, Apple Preview and Corel Paint” is. The trainee

must be able to open files with five individual programs. You can measure that easily.

The other three criteria for sound learning objectives are that they be achievable, relevant to the job, and tied to a reasonable timeframe. Use the acronym SMART to remind you of the five criteria for setting effective objectives:

**S**pecific: Clearly defined objectives ensure managers and employees understand what is to be achieved and the standards used to evaluate performance.

**M**asurable: Objectives and standards should be based on observable, measurable indicators rather than subjective factors.

**A**chievable: Objectives should be attainable, while providing stimulating challenges to employees.

**R**elevant: The objective should matter; achieving it should make a difference to important company goals and success measures.

**T**ime-bound: Objectives are more often accomplished when clear deadlines are set.



### BUILD A TRAINING PLAN IN A TRAINING TRACKER

As you devise sensible learning objectives, record them in a plan that also identifies the support that the trainee will need, timelines and the responsibilities of each person involved in the training. Make a unique training plan for each employee. Each trainee should be provided with the **Training Tracker**<sup>3</sup>

that corresponds to his or her respective occupation. The purpose of the **Training Tracker** is to record an employee’s level of skills proficiency in each of the tasks to be carried out in a specific occupation. As such, the **Training Tracker** is both a training tool and a record of competence. It is also the means by which candidates can assess their readiness to register for certification.

3. The **Training Tracker** is available for 12 occupations in the printing and graphic communications industry. Visit [www.cpisc-csic.ca](http://www.cpisc-csic.ca) to download the **Training Tracker** for any specific occupation.

## SAMPLE TRAINING AND MONITORING PLAN

| LEARNING OBJECTIVES   | LEARNING PLAN TO ACHIEVE OBJECTIVE   | SUPPORT REQUIRED   | ON-THE-JOB TRAINER RESPONSIBLE | TIMELINE             | MONITORING METHODS AND FREQUENCY           |
|---|--|--|--------------------------------|----------------------|--|
| 1. Set up cutter based on job specifications  | Review the knowledge and abilities required to set up cutter                                 | Provide with copy of CPISC Skill Standards for bindery operators                         | Bill and shift supervisor      | Feb 1-5, during days | At end of week, review standards with Bill |
| 2. Set up cutter based on job specifications  | Demonstrate how to set up cutter according to best practices and based on job specifications | Allow time for Bill to observe trainee setting up cutter and then explain best practices |                                |                      |  |
| 3. Set up cutter based on job specification   | Set up cutter with supervision and provide trainee opportunity to ask questions              |  |                                |                      |  |
|   |  |  |                                |                      |  |
| <p><b>Evidence of knowledge and abilities:</b><br/>Able to answer questions regarding set-up, able to demonstrate set-up based on company standards</p> |  |  |                                |                      |  |
| <p><b>Evaluation of learning progress:</b><br/>Observe Bill successfully set up cutter based on job requirements</p>                                    |  |  |                                |                      |  |

Several copies of the Training and Monitoring Plan template have been included in the occupation-specific Training Trackers, available for download at [www.cpisc-csic.ca](http://www.cpisc-csic.ca)

## STEP 4: EVALUATE PROGRESS

As the foundation of each employee's professional-development system, the training plan allows both trainer and trainee to monitor the progress toward each specific learning objective. Use the **Training Tracker** to note progress and identify areas where further work is needed. As always, progress is measured against each objective, so the process can be straightforward.

Your evaluation of progress can be made in a number of ways, but first among them will be regular, open and candid conversations with the trainee. Once an atmosphere of trust is established, most trainees will be honest about their achievements, needs and frustrations, and your conversations can move quickly to identifying what support will help them fastest overcome hurdles in their learning. You can test their knowledge in conversation, and test their skills by asking them to demonstrate those skills in action. You can conduct performance reviews to assess whether training has been effective and to identify new areas for development. If your employee has a customer-facing role, you might conduct customer feedback and evaluation surveys to see how well your trainee's efforts are being received. And you can hold a group session in which trainees share their learning experiences and suggestions with each other. Whatever methods you use to glean information, remember that your ultimate task is simply to compare an employee's knowledge or skill with the specific learning objectives you set together.

### WHEN FIRST DEMONSTRATING A SKILL TO BE LEARNED.

- Put the employee at ease. Establish an informal atmosphere. Use first names.
- Name the task to be demonstrated and review why that task is important.
- Make sure that during the demonstration the employee will be able to hear and see everything.
- Demonstrate the task as you expect it to be performed.
- Repeat the demonstration slowly, explaining each step.
- Ask the employee questions at different stages in the demonstration to test understanding.
- Use personal experiences to augment and reinforce key points.
- Encourage the employee to ask questions and allow ample time for discussion.
- Have the employee practice the task while you observe and provide feedback.
- Make corrections in a positive manner to build the employee's self-confidence.
- Repeat portions of the task if the employee needs clarification.
- Be patient throughout.

## TIPS FOR TRAINERS

Simple steps to follow when orienting trainees to your on-the-job training program:

**EXPLAIN** why you have an on-the-job training program. Employees are more open to learn when they truly understand why the training will help.

**CLARIFY** the role of the trainer.

**DESCRIBE** how the training will achieve the expected outcome. Describe the skills assessment process and emphasize that there will be ample time to learn and practice. Give new employees a tour of the facility so they can see what equipment they will be using, and understand what that equipment does. Give trainees a copy of the **Training Tracker** and explain how successfully completing on-the-job training will help them get one step closer to meeting the requirements of CPISC's national Certification Program.





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