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TRAINING MANAGEMENT SKILLS FOR FIRST-LINE MANAGERS

Case: Company X

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DESCRIPTION

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Abstract <p>First-line managers play an important role in a company's success as they are significantly involved in the day-to-day operations, guiding the employees through certain courses of action to help them accomplish the organizational goals. In order to do so successfully, management skills such as planning, organizing, directing, and controlling are required from every first-line manager. Training programs for first-line managers can be difficult as such managers are a large population in a company, and very diverse in terms of educational backgrounds and working experience (e.g. experience in managerial jobs). Training first-line managers has become a task so mandatory that modern organizations today should pay more attention to.</p> <p>As a fully foreign-owned life insurer in Vietnam, Company X has such a huge sales force, including as many as 11,000 agents nationwide. Managing such a large number of employees requires especially proper management skills which are still lacking from most first-line managers. This stresses the utmost importance to provide them with training to ensure all the first-line managers possess sufficient and equal management skills. The purpose of this research was to find out the current situation of the first-line managers' management skills in Company X, to understand the middle management's expectations of the first-line managers in Company X, concerning their management skills, and to find ways how Company X should organize its management training programs to improve first the first-line managers' management skills, and then their work performance. The research will be carried out using both the quantitative and the qualitative methods.</p>			
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1 INTRODUCTION

First-line managers are a valuable asset for organizations as they spend more time than any other level of management on leading the subordinates and they spend more time on directing the employees than on any other management function. However, companies usually put most of their focus on developing their top management and middle management whereas training first-line managers is quite often neglected. First-line managers play an important role in a company's success as they are those who interact with most employees on a daily basis and have a very strong influence on them. First-line managers are significantly involved in the day-to-day operations, guiding the employees through certain courses of action to help them accomplish organizational goals. In order to do so successfully, management skills such as planning, organizing, directing, and controlling are required from every first-line manager. However, first-line managers are often promoted to managerial positions based on their success in operational or technical roles, while management skills are totally different and not expected to be mastered by them in their previous roles. Training programs for first-line managers can be difficult as such managers are a large population in a company, and very diverse in terms of educational backgrounds and working experience (e.g. experience in managerial jobs). Training first-line managers has become a task so mandatory that modern organizations should pay more attention to it today.

Normally, a company's profits mainly depend on the sales generated by the sales people. As a fully foreign-owned life insurer in Vietnam, Company X has such a huge sales force, including as many as 11,000 agents nationwide. The studied department in this research has approximately 500 agents which is already a large number. Managing such a large number of employees requires especially proper management skills which are still lacking from most first-line managers. It is true that the middle management and the first-line managers have made a lot of efforts to offer support to their subordinates; however, as the agents come from too various backgrounds, so do the first-line managers who are promoted to such positions mainly based on their work performance without the proper assessment of managing abilities. More specifically, although one first-line manager knows how to plan ahead for the next month or quarter, how to set sales targets for groups and individuals, how to listen to their

agents to find out their difficulties and give them advice or solutions, it does not mean that every other first-line manager does, too. This stresses the utmost importance to provide them with training to ensure that all the first-line managers possess sufficient and equal management skills.

The purpose of this research is to find out the current situation of the first-line managers' management skills in Company X, to understand the middle management's expectations of the first-line managers in Company X, concerning their management skills, and to find ways how Company X should organize its management training programs to improve first the first-line managers' management skills, and then their work performance. The research problem and questions will be presented as follows:

Research problem:

How to promote the first-line managers' effectiveness in Company X by the use of management training?

Research question 1:

What is the current situation of the first-line managers' management skills in Company X?

Research question 2:

What are the middle management's expectations of the first-line managers in Company X, concerning their management skills?

Research question 3:

How should Company X organize its management training programs to improve the first-line managers' management skills in order to increase their work performance?

The research will be carried out using both the quantitative and the qualitative methods. A survey with a carefully prepared questionnaire and observation during meetings in the researched department will be used to help answer the first question. A face-to-face and semi-structured interview with a member of the middle management – the Senior Sales Manager – will provide more insights in order to answer the second question. Based on the current situation of the first-line managers' management skills

and the middle management's expectations of the first-line managers, and by applying the theory on management training, solutions will be given to how Company X should organize its management training programs so as to improve the first-line managers' management skills and work performance; and that will be the answer to the final question.

The first chapter of the thesis will focus on the importance of first-line managers in a company, who are directly involved in the day-to-day operations which bring actual profits to the company and whom I call a "valuable asset" of every organization. In this chapter, management will be looked at from several perspectives. Important matters to be discussed will include management levels and functions, managerial roles of first-line managers, management skills for first-line managers, and the differences between management and leadership. Discussed in the next chapter of theory is the diagnostic approach to training first-line managers. This chapter will explain first the importance of training first-line managers, and then the training process. How to plan a management training program will also be brought to light. Finally, appropriate methods for training first-line managers will be introduced.

The third chapter will explain the actual research process. It will start with a brief introduction of Company X's operations and other relevant matters about the company. Its current situation will be discussed in a critical manner in order to highlight the underlying problems in the composition of its workforce which is rather diverse and which may affect significantly the quality of work. After that, research methods will be discussed. The questionnaire and the interview questions used for this research will also be introduced in this chapter, followed by the discussion on the approaches to collect data and to analyze the data collected. In the next chapter named "Findings", the matters to be reported include the results from the interview with the SSM, the results from the survey, and the results from the observation at some meetings. The findings are drawn from many of various sources to make sure that they are true and reflect the reality.

The next chapter is "Conclusions and discussions", in which the research questions will be answered in detail. Some remarks concerning the training plan as well as those matters which Company X must keep in mind when organizing the training program

will be presented. The theories previously discussed will also be looked back on to see if the actual research has confirmed or denied the authors' or my own preliminary points of view. In the final chapter, the validity and reliability of the research will be discussed. A few drawbacks during the actual research process as well as the manner in which the research was carried out will also be presented. Possible future studies will be taken into consideration and the outcome from the final discussion with the Senior Sales Manager will be stated at the end of the chapter.

2 FIRST-LINE MANAGERS AS A VALUABLE ASSET

First-line managers are a valuable asset of organizations. Usually, companies put most of their focus on developing their top management and middle management whereas training first-line managers is quite often neglected. The purpose of this chapter is to emphasize the importance of first-line managers who are directly involved in the day-to-day operations which bring actual profits to the company. Matters to be discussed in this chapter include management levels and functions, managerial roles of first-line managers, management skills for first-line managers, and the differences between management and leadership.

2.1 Management Levels and Functions

Before discussing issues such as the roles which a manager has to play, the activities which a manager has to carry out, the skills which are required from a manager, among other matters, it is needed to understand what and who a manager really is and why managers are important to the organization in order to understand the research more clearly. Alike employees, managers are also members of the organization; however, they are responsible for the work performance of other organizational members. There are three main levels of managers in a typical organization, forming a pyramid-shaped hierarchy (figure 1.1).

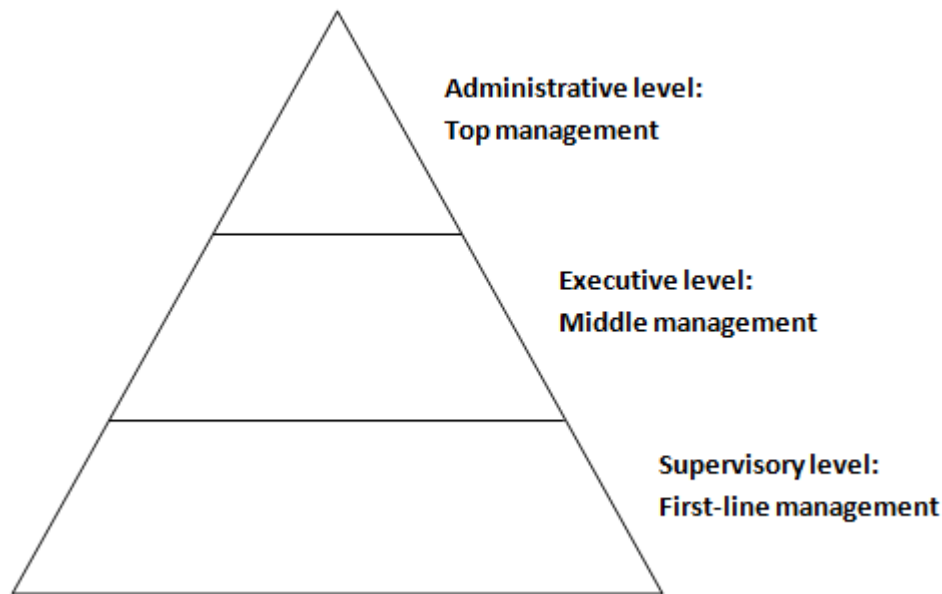


Figure 1.1 Diagram of Levels of Management
(Adapted from Akrani 2011.)

Top-level managers or top managers are also called senior management or executives who usually hold titles such as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Chief Operational Officer (COO), Chairman of the Board, President, Vice President, and so on. According to Helms (2006) top managers do not direct the day-to-day activities of the firm; however, they set goals for the organization to direct the whole company to achieve them. That way, their decisions affect the entire firm and they are ultimately responsible for the performance of the organization as a whole.

Below the top managers in the pyramid are the middle-level managers or middle managers, who can be General Manager, Plant Manager, Regional Manager, or Divisional Manager. Middle managers have responsibility in carrying out the goals set by top management. To do that, they set more specific goals for their departments and other business units. Most of the time, middle managers have to communicate both downward and upward. On one hand, they assist and motivate first-line managers to achieve business objectives; while on the other hand, they offer suggestions and feedback to top management since they are more involved in the day-to-day operations of the company and possess valuable information which can help improve the organization's bottom line.

First-level managers or more widely known as first-line managers and supervisors are those who hold such job titles as Office Manager, Department Manager, Crew Leader, and so on. According to the American Heritage Dictionary of Business Terms (2010), a first-line manager is “an individual who works under the supervision of a middle manager and is responsible for managing the daily activities of a group of workers”. Indeed, first-line managers are responsible for the daily management of the workers or the employees who actually produce the product or provide the service to the customers. First-line managers exist in every work unit of the organization. Typically, they do not set goals for the organization, but their influence on the company is very strong.

Because of their strong influence on the company and the employees, the role of first-line managers is very important. They interact with most employees on a daily basis and must act like “role models”; if they perform poorly and/or fail to motivate their subordinates, it may affect dramatically the work performance of the company as a whole or the employees may even leave the firm. In my opinion, it is not a coincidence that the first-line managers are placed at the bottom – or the foundation – of the pyramid. We can also imagine a human body, while top management is like the head, where all the cognitive thinking takes place, and first-line managers are like the legs and the feet, which help the body stand and be steady.

Managerial functions of first-line managers

In order to operate smoothly and accomplish the organizational vision, goals, and objectives, every firm has to develop and implement its own management concepts. Very often, these concepts are based on the four basic functions of management which consist of planning, organizing, directing (or leading), and controlling; and different levels of management are involved in each function to different extents. (See Rane 2007; Pakhare 2011; Rothbauer-Wanish 2009.)

According to Pakhare (2011), planning can be called the base function or the foundation pillar of management, upon which all the other areas of management are built. Rane (2007) explains that “planning requires management to evaluate where the company is currently, and where it would be like to be in the future” by determining

its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Only after successfully doing so can the company's goals and objectives be established and implemented. Planning must be an unending course of action (Pakhare 2011) as there are always uncontrollable external factors which may affect the company in a positive or negative way. At times like these, the management may have to adjust its plan in accomplishing certain goals.

The second function of management is getting organized. After planning, the management must organize all its resources in order to implement the course of action it has determined. Rothbauer-Wanish (2009) stresses the importance of organizing people, stating that it is critical to the success of the company to know how many employees are required for particular shifts. For this reason, Bhatawdekar (2009) divides the function of organizing into two sub-functions, which are organizing the resources "in the best possible manner" and staffing, meaning choosing the right people for the right jobs at the right time.

The third function of management is directing, or leading. Through directing, managers are able to influence and oversee the staff's performance in achieving organizational goals, while at the same time assisting them in accomplishing their personal or career goals. This is where managers apply their motivation skills, communication skills, and leadership skills. According to Rane (2007), if employees are well motivated, they may go above and beyond in their job performance and their roles become vital in helping the company reach its goals. Communication must be used effectively to maintain a productive working environment, build positive interpersonal relationships and help solve problems.

According to Rane (2007) controlling – the last of the four functions of management – involves establishing performance standards based on the company's objectives, and evaluating and reporting actual job performance. Rothbauer-Wanish (2009) concludes that controlling means "monitoring the firm's performance to make sure goals are being met". Controlling, which must be ongoing, helps management identify potential problems and take necessary preventative measures. Through constantly monitoring, management is also able to discover developing problems which need to be addressed promptly through corrective actions.

As mentioned above, first-line managers play an important role in the company's success as they are those who interact with most employees on a daily basis and have a very strong influence on them. First-line managers are significantly involved in the day-to-day operations, guiding the employees through certain courses of action to help them accomplish organizational goals. Though not much involved in the planning process, first-line managers spend most of their time leading the employees and no other level of management seems to spend as much time on this function (figure 1.2).

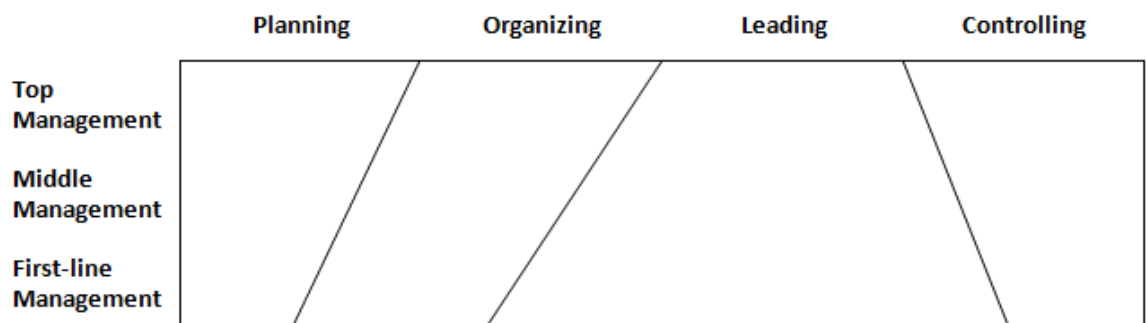


Figure 1.2 Time spent on management functions at different management levels

(Adapted from Helms 2006.)

2.2 Managerial Roles of First-line Managers

It is obvious that the role of every manager is essentially to guide the company toward its goal. In order to do so, managers have to allocate and utilize organizational resources in a proper way, and then assign activities that the employees are required to perform. Managers have to design these activities so effectively that the production of each employee will contribute to the accomplishment of organizational goals. An important task which a manager has to perform well is guiding and motivating their subordinates along the way. (Management Innovations 2008.)

Although managers from different levels have different ways to perform their jobs, Mintzberg (1973) concludes that there are ten (10) interrelated managerial roles and behavior sets and categorizes them into three (03) groups of informational, interpersonal and decisional activities. The source of reference being used is quite old but not obsolete as Mintzberg's way of thinking has been and is still strongly affecting the opinions of today's writers on management. Before discussing what roles a first-

line manager should perform effectively, we have to understand the activities which are involved with each managerial role (Table 1.1).

Category	Role	Activity
Informational	Monitor	The manager receives a wide variety of information and serves as a nerve center of internal and external information of the organization.
	Disseminator	The manager transmits information received from outsiders or from other employees to the members of the organization.
	Spokesperson	The manager transmits information to outsiders on the organization's plans, policies, actions and results, and serves as an expert on the organization's industry.
Interpersonal	Figurehead	The manager is a symbolic head, required to perform a number of routine duties of a legal or social nature.
	Leader	The manager is responsible for the motivation and direction of employees.
	Liaison	The manager maintains a network of outside contacts that provide favors and information for the organization.
Decisional	Entrepreneur	The manager searches the organization and its environment for opportunities and initiatives projects to bring about change.
	Disturbance handler	The manager is responsible for corrective actions when the organization faces important, unexpected disturbances.
	Resource allocator	The manager makes or approves significant organizational decisions.
	Negotiator	The manager is responsible for representing the organization at major negotiations.

Table 1.1 Mintzberg's Managerial Roles. (See Mintzberg 1973.)

With informational roles, managers manage the organization by information; while with interpersonal and decisional roles, they manage by people and action respectively. A first-line manager does not necessarily perform all these roles as his or her extent of power and responsibility is limited. They are more interactive with their subordinates and upper management within the organization. After understanding the meaning of each managerial role, we can discuss further which roles are more important than the others to a first-line manager and how involved is a first-line manager with each role.

Being involved in the daily operations, a first-line manager should be able to oversee the employees' everyday work by observing or measuring their performance using specific indicators. A first-line manager should always have this information ready as it helps in evaluating and rewarding the employees when it comes to performance appraisals or when such information is requested by management at higher levels. Every manager, as a representative of a group of organizational members, has to perform effectively the roles of disseminator and spokesperson. They are expected to communicate information smoothly, either upward or downward, internally or externally in order to guarantee the fluent flow of the business operation.

First-line managers are still employees hired by the company and expected to sufficiently fulfill social and legal duties. However, not only acting as a symbolic leader, a first-line manager is also an actual leader of their subordinates and direct most of the day-to-day operations of the firm. As mentioned in the previous section, first-line managers spend more time than any other level of management on leading the subordinates, and they spend more time on directing the employees than on any other management function. We can conclude that the most important role they have to perform is the role of a leader which deals mostly with interpersonal activities.

We can see that the role of entrepreneur is more suitable for those at top-level management as they have to make decisions which may affect the rise and fall of the organization. However, middle managers and first-line managers may also be involved in allocating the resources or negotiating, for example, with upper management about the interests of their subordinates. Most managers play the role of disturbance handler

when problems or conflicts arise in the working environment. As working closely with the employees on a daily basis, first-line managers may usually face tough situations which require problem solving; and in such situations, the corrective actions that they take are not only decisional but also require interpersonal skills.

2.3 Management Skills for First-line Managers

Management skills have become increasingly difficult and managers must find ways to master them in order to achieve success in their management career. Reh (2009a) presents Kammy Hatnes' pyramid structure to introduce the four levels of management skills and how these skills are related to one another (figure 1.3).

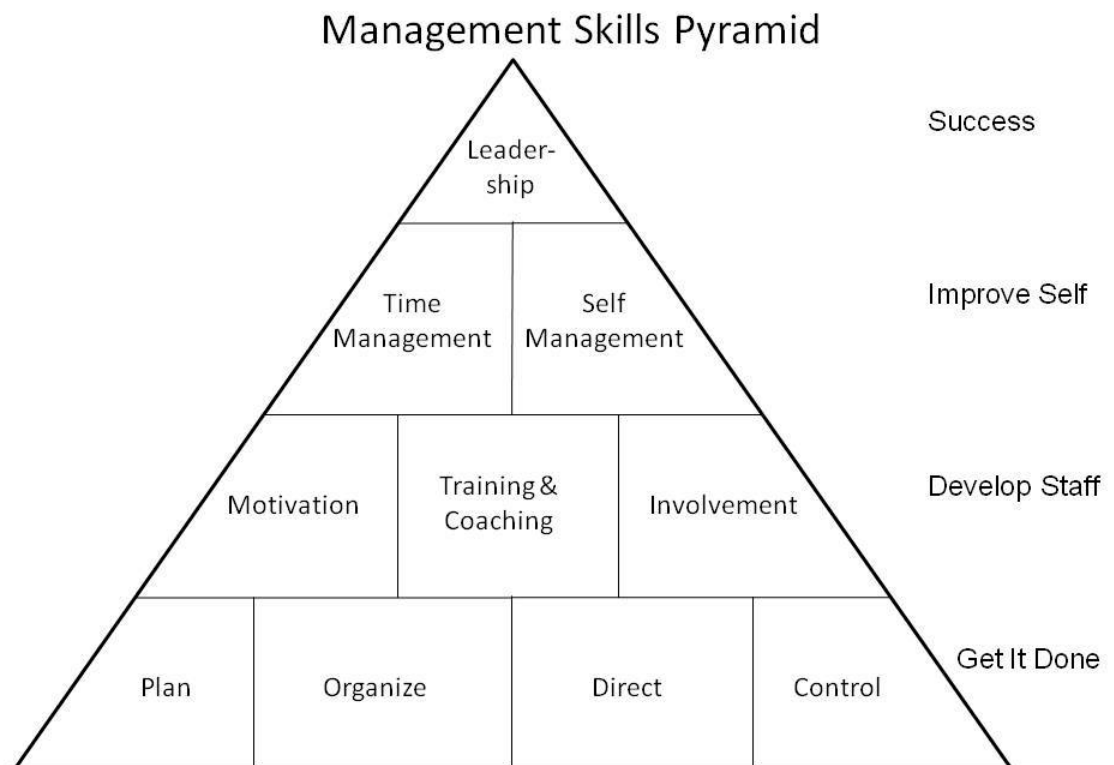


Figure 1.3 Management Skills Pyramid

(Adapted from Reh 2009.)

We can see that the pyramid has four levels, built by ten bricks; if one brick is missing, the whole structure will collapse. However, to each level of management, one skill may play a more important role than another. To understand how these skills affect the performance of a first-line manager in particular, we have to understand the

meaning and content of each individual skill. In this section, we will discuss the basic management skills which are placed at the base of the pyramid, the team management skills which are at the upper level, and the personal management skills which are even more important. Leadership skills, which are placed at the top of the pyramid, will be discussed in the next section; therefore, we can have deeper insights of how management differs from leadership and simultaneously understand the importance of leadership skills.

The basic management skills include planning, organizing, directing, and controlling, which are exactly the same as the management functions already discussed. These are the basic skills or functions which a manager must master only to get the job done. Although first-line managers are not much involved in planning organizational vision, goals and objectives, they are required to have planning skills because without planning, they are hardly able to handle situations in which problems or conflicts arise. As very much involved in the daily operations of the firm, first-line managers should understand that proper planning is the reason why activities are performed smoothly and become daily routines. Managers should adopt the British Army adage called the seven P's as their mantra, which reads "Proper Planning and Preparation Prevents Piss Poor Performance". Going hand in hand with the planning skill is an organizing skill, which helps managers organize teams, tasks, and projects in order to get the team's work done in the most efficient and effective manner. According to Reh (2009b) while planning focuses on what needs to be done, organizing is more about how to get the work done in the best way. Before being able to organize resources and people successfully, managers must be able to organize themselves, their time and space so they can be most effective. The importance of the leading function to first-line managers has been mentioned many times in the previous sections; for that reason, a leading skill or directing skill is the most required skill for managers at supervisory positions. Managers will be more effective at driving the team towards organizational goals if they lead them instead of sitting back and giving orders. Leading must always go together with motivating, assisting, and inspiring the employees. The last basic skill which a manager must acquire is controlling. It means that managers, especially those at supervisory positions, must be able to oversee the team's activities, monitor the work being done, and then compare the actual progress to the plan. This is where the planning phase becomes very important because without planning, controlling alone

cannot see whether or not the employees' performance is satisfactory or successful. The manager's task is only fulfilled when he or she is able to verify that the organization is working as he or she designed it. The controlling skill is also important when uncontrolled factors negatively affect the work performance as it helps managers take action to minimize the impact of these factors and "bring things back to the desired goal as quickly as possible" (Reh 2009b).

Success in management jobs requires more than just those four basic skills. In order to develop staff, managers must master the team management skills including motivation, training and coaching, and involvement. As mentioned, first-line managers are those with whom the employees interact most in their daily jobs; this stresses even more the importance of these skills. Moreover, if a training program is to be designed and implemented, the role of first-line managers in motivating the employees, training and coaching them, and being involved in the whole process becomes extremely significant. Managers in general can never achieve their personal goals or those of the organization unless their teams are motivated to perform, to produce, and to deliver the results needed. If an employee has a problem with performing effectively his or her job, he or she is very likely to come and talk to his or her first-line manager, who must be able to consult the subordinate about the problem and assist him or her in solving it. This is where training and coaching comes in. Good controlling skill helps first-line managers to address their subordinates' problems even more easily themselves. Managers in general, as Reh (2009c) states, must be able to identify the training needs of their team members and be able to get that training for them. First-line managers even have to coach all the members of the team, even the ones already well trained, to help them achieve the highest levels of performance. All the training and coaching that managers do and all the motivation they attempt are aimed at only one goal which is to increase employee involvement. "Involvement" as written in the pyramid (Figure 1.3) does not only mean the employees' feeling of being involved with the organization but also means the manager being involved in the work of the employees; in other words, involvement must come from both sides.

According to Reh (2009c) if the manager fails to get the employees involved and to get their best, everything they do will cost the company much more than it should have. It might be an innovative idea that they do not want to share; it is already a huge

cost. In my opinion, first-line managers are not only involved with their subordinates in a way that they communicate with them every day or help them solve problems concerning their work. There are several tactics that a first-line manager should adopt to increase employee involvement, such as inspiring and admiring the employees, listening to them, communicating clearly expectations, goals and rules, giving them honest feedback, delegating actively and appropriately tasks that tackle new challenges and offer them an opportunity to grow, keeping them informed about how their work contributes to the overall company effort, and celebrating their successes to inspire the working environment.

When the skills at the lowest level of the pyramid were discussed, self-organization was mentioned. Before being able to organize resources and people successfully, managers must be able to organize themselves, their time and space so they can be most effective. In my opinion, managers do not necessarily master personal management skills at early stages in their managerial career; however, those skills are really important as they reach higher positions and work in more stressful environments. The importance of personal management skills is increasingly significant; otherwise they are not placed at almost the highest level in the pyramid. These skills include self management and time management. Self management, simply stated by the Self-Management Institute, is “an organizational model wherein the traditional functions of a manager (planning, coordinating, controlling, staffing and directing) are pushed out to all participants in the organization as opposed to a select few”. It means that every member of the organization, especially those at managerial positions, is personally responsible for establishing their own relationships, planning their own work, coordinating their own actions with other members, acquiring necessary resources to accomplish their mission including their personal goals and the organizational goals, and taking corrective actions with respect to other members when needed. Self management always goes hand in hand with time management. As well as self management, time management is also very crucial to the success of first-line manager as they usually spend most of their time dealing with the employees, which leaves them little time to focus on their own technical tasks. Therefore, a first-line manager has to manage his or her time carefully in order to be successful in his or her own job as well as be an effective manager at the same time. Self management is also a dimension of emotional intelligence, to which a manager must pay attention

when acquiring leadership skills. We will discuss leadership skills in greater details in the next section.

Other views on management skills

Riddle (2010) lists five sets of personal management skills that a manager should acquire in order to be “awesome”; these skills include:

- Time management and planning skills;
- Financial management skills;
- Communication skills;
- Organizational skills;
- Continued self-development skills.

Dogra (2012) also introduces another list of management skills that are expected to be mastered by a manager, consisting of:

- Interpersonal skills;
- Communication skills;
- Decision-making skills;
- Leadership skills;
- Technical skills;
- Time management skills;
- Conceptual skills.

Riddle (2010) and Dogra (2012) find some common grounds as they both agree that time management skills and communication skills are very important for a manager. I very much agree with that; however, to be effective and to reach high levels of performance in an organization, not only managers need those skills but every single employee is expected to acquire and master them. Financial management skills are more important for those managers whose decisions may affect the organization financially, but for first-line managers, who are more responsible for supervising the employees’ day-to-day activities, financial management skills are not necessarily prioritized. Interpersonal skills are those skills which help managers to deal with people of different temperaments, backgrounds and educational qualifications, and to motivate and build good relationships with their subordinates. These skills are quite

similar to the motivating skill in the management skills pyramid. Communication skills are more about the manager explaining his or her visions and strategies to the employees and being a good listener. Communication skills are a part of the skill that helps managers increase employee involvement as presented in the pyramid structure. Interpersonal skills and communication skills together will become very useful tools for managers to develop their staff. Decision-making skills or problem-solving skills are actually required at every stage of business and of anyone at managerial positions. A manager should be always able and ready to make decisions, either in planning, organizing, directing, or controlling. If a manager fails to make decisions or take timely actions to solve problems, the team, the plant, the department, or the whole business will face stagnation. For first-line managers, technical skills are also very important. According to Dogra (2012) most organizations nowadays depend significantly on computers and software to carry on their activities. Therefore, it is increasingly “mandatory for managers to have adequate knowledge of computers and other technical skills along with the basic management skills”. Helms (2006) notes that in the past, most first-line managers were employees who were promoted from line positions such as production or clerical jobs and not all of them reached high levels of formal education. Although the situations have changed quite a lot by now, it is important for higher management to keep in mind that training technical skills for first-line managers can be necessary and crucial. According to Dogra (2012) conceptual skills are those skills which trigger strategic thinking and strategic decision making in managers. These skills help managers view the organization from a wider perspective. Conceptual skills are somewhat related to leadership skills, which we will discuss in the following section.

2.4 Management versus Leadership

Although at the top of the pyramid structure, leadership skills seem to be important not only for those at top-level management; leadership skills are required in almost all stages of business and this top “brick” in the pyramid is related to many other “bricks” such as self management, motivation, training and coaching, involvement, planning, and directing. Leadership skills are important for top management as they make strategic plans, set organizational goals, and make important decisions that affect the whole business. To top management, planning would be the most critical issue.

Leadership skills are important for middle management as they plan on how to effectively allocate resources, how to effectively communicate the organizational vision, strategies and goals with their subordinates including first-line managers, and how to effectively communicate the employees' work performance and business results with top management. In the case of middle management, communication would play the most significant role. For first-line managers, leadership skills are important simply because these managers deal with people – so many people – in their daily jobs, leading them, directing them, motivating them, and getting them involved in the business.

Leadership skills can be understood as a high level of all the other skills combined. Phelps (2001) provides a list of eleven skills which are of utmost importance for a leader. The following table summarizes these skills (Table 1.2).

Leadership skills	Explanations	Other related skills
Getting and giving information	In other words, this is effective and accurate communication. Different levels of management and different organizational divisions are connected by information exchange; if managers fail to communicate organizational information effectively and accurately, no other leadership skill can compensate for this lack. Therefore, communication is the most important skill required of a leader.	Communication
Understanding team members' needs and characteristics	Managing a diverse workforce, managers must deal with people of different temperaments, backgrounds and educational qualifications; it is important for managers to learn team members' needs and characteristics in order to help them produce the best outcomes and to provide them with opportunities to grow.	Motivation Coaching Involvement
Knowing and	Group resources are not only in physical terms	Organizing

understanding team resources	but also include people's skills, attitudes, and backgrounds. Managers must learn about team members' backgrounds and experiences in order to bring the group together, to get them involved in the operations and to increase their commitment to common goals.	Motivation Coaching Involvement
Controlling the team	Controlling starts with the manager setting the pace for the team, then observing the team but not dominating team members, and continuously communicating with team members. Managers should give suggestions for improvement rather than orders, correct mistakes with respect and without passing judgments, allow and encourage team members to use their own initiatives, and provide direct assistance and instruction if required.	Controlling Motivation Training and coaching Involvement
Counseling	In counseling, managers should employ simple coaching and communication techniques which allow team members to talk privately about their personal problems. Counseling encourages them to express their feelings in a safe and trusting environment, and helps reduce minor interpersonal conflicts.	Motivation Coaching Involvement
Setting the example	Setting the example means that a manager lets his or her public and private lives become transparent and unified. If managers can "walk the talk", which means that they can deliver the results as promised, they are more likely to gain respect from team members, and getting team members to work with them becomes much easier.	Motivation Involvement Self management
Representing the team	Representing the team means accurately communicating to non-team members the sum	Controlling Coaching

	of team members' feelings, ideas, among other things, and vice versa. To do so successfully, managers must fully understand the nature of problems within the team, know how the decisions were reached, and be consistent and fair in all circumstances.	Self management
Planning	Planning must be an ongoing process. It can be compared to an "umbrella" competency which affects a variety of issues. Planning is also a basic management skill required of every manager and it was discussed in previous sections.	Planning
Evaluation	Phelps (2001) defines evaluation as "a continual process, either informal or formal, of judging a situation against a standard". In essence, evaluation consists of two matters: one is an attitude of continuous striving for higher goals; the other is a process for judging an individual's or group's completion of a task against previously identified standards. When evaluating, managers must simultaneously pay attention to both tasks and people.	Controlling Motivation
Sharing leadership	According to Phelps (2001) shared problem-solving and decision-making has become a prevalent aspect of successful management and leadership worldwide. A manager is not necessarily an authoritarian. As already discussed, managers should lead the team by giving instructions instead of giving orders, giving suggestions for improvement rather than criticizing. As organizations are increasingly flatter nowadays, managers should create an open environment where team members feel free to introduce initiatives or even to adopt	Directing Motivation Involvement

	their own leadership styles to help drive the team towards common goals.	
Manager of learning	Managers of learning are different from teachers or instructors. Although it is believed that managers should give instructions to their subordinates, they should do so in a way that promotes individual learning of the team members. Managing learning can be a tricky task to undertake and it sometimes requires unusual techniques to be employed in order to get unusual results. Managers must make sure that the employees' learning process is open-ended and cyclical.	Controlling Training and coaching

Table 1.2 The Eleven Skills of Leadership

(See Phelps 2001.)

The level of significance of one leadership skill for a first-line manager differs from another. However, most of these skills are related to those other skills in the pyramid structure which deal with developing staff. Motivation, training and coaching, and involvement are the skills which are most mentioned in the “other related skills”. Looking down on the pyramid from a leadership perspective, the most important skills are the interpersonal ones. For first-line managers, the directing skill or leading skill plays the most significant role; that is still true. If we take this leading skill to a higher level and include various aspects of interpersonal skills, the leading skill becomes the leadership skill. A first-line manager does not necessarily act like a leader who is expected to be glamorously in the top-level management and to make strategic decisions which affect the company dramatically. A first-line manager, however, must acquire and master those interpersonal skills, including the skills to motivate workers, to train and coach groups of or individual workers, and to get them involved and working towards organizational goals, in order to help them perform at their best and produce the highest levels of outcomes for the organizations.

3 THE DIAGNOSTIC APPROACH TO TRAINING FIRST-LINE MANAGERS

As first-line managers are a valuable asset of a company, their business knowledge and management skills should be developed in order to run the workforce effectively. Technical knowledge and operational skills are important but without the ability to manage and motivate the employees properly, some unexpected costs may incur for the company. Training first-line managers has become a task so mandatory that modern organizations today should pay more attention to. The purpose of this chapter is to explain first the importance of training first-line managers, and then the training process. How to plan a management training program will also be brought to light. Finally, appropriate methods for training first-line managers will be introduced.

3.1 The Importance of Training First-line Managers

Managers play a very important role in every organization today as they influence every step of the organization. Top management makes decisions that affect the life and death of the company; middle managers are those who run the departments, communicate the firm's vision, goals and strategies to employees, and report employees' performance to top management. Especially, the importance of first-line managers who are actually involved in the employees' day-to-day work is so significant that it should never be neglected. In my opinion, first-line managers can even play the most crucial role in organizations. Top management and middle management set goals, make plans, and evaluate results, but first-line management oversees the actual goods produced or the real services provided. Some examples that highlight the first-line managers' importance are effective sales managers maintaining a sales force that markets goods effectively, or efficient plant managers running manufacturing operations that produce goods efficiently. First-line managers are under pressure from both the higher levels of management and the employees below them. They are often overworked, overlooked and seem to receive the least amount of training in the whole organization. Very often, first-line managers are promoted to managerial positions based on their success in operational or technical roles; management skills, however, are totally different and not expected to be mastered by first-line managers in their previous roles. Training programs for first-line managers can be difficult as such managers are a large population in a company and very diverse

in terms of educational backgrounds and working experience (e.g. experience in managerial jobs). However, neglecting the importance of first-line managers and not providing them with sufficient training in management skills may pose many threats to the organization.

According to Management Innovations (2008) the modern society today would never exist or improve if it were not for a “steady stream of managers to its organizations”. Drucker (1993) states that effective management is probably the main resource of developed nations and the most vital requirement of developing ones to reach higher levels. Mondy & Noe (2005, 203) state that improved performance has become a strategic goal for organizations as it is the bottom-line purpose of training and development. Training programs used to be undervalued in the corporate world, but now they are believed to strengthen customer satisfaction, contribute to partnership development, enhance research and development activities, and finally, reinforce the bottom line. Training and development activities are likely to align employees of a firm with its corporate strategies. More and more companies today invest in training and development because they believe that it will bring higher profits. Training does not only improve employees’ skills but also increases their motivation which will in turn lead to higher productivity and profitability (Mondy et al. 2002, 216).

Cascio (2010, 291-292) identifies 13 benefits of training, most of which have been demonstrated at the individual and team levels of analysis. The benefits are listed below:

- Training has an overall positive effect on job-related behaviors or performance.
- Training may lead to greater innovation and tacit skills.
- Training can improve technical skills.
- Training can improve strategic knowledge as it helps the trainees know when to apply a specific knowledge or skill.
- Training, and especially practice, helps to maintain consistency in performance.
- Performance consistency also results from enhancing the self-efficacy or self-management of trainees.

- Management development programs show positive effects, affecting two types of outcomes: knowledge (principles, facts, and skills) and changes in on-the-job behavior.
- Cross-cultural training improves expatriate adjustment and performance.
- Leadership training seems to enhance the attitudes and performance of followers.
- Training in team communication and team effectiveness has positive effects on team performance. They also seem to affect non-technical skills (team building) as well as situation awareness and decision making.
- Training shows positive effects on outcomes such as employee and customer satisfaction, owner/shareholder satisfaction, and productivity (e.g. sales per employee).
- At the level of the organization, training is a key enabler of e-commerce, an important strategic priority for many firms, both large and small.
- At the level of society, training improves the quality of the labor force, which in turn, enhances a country's economic growth.

3.2 The Training Process

Hornsby & Kuratko (2002, 125-126) present the Goldstein Model, calling it a “well-known diagnostic approach to establishing a training and development program”. The following exhibit illustrates the model more clearly (Figure 2.1). (See Goldstein, I. L. 1974; Goldstein, I. L. 1993.)

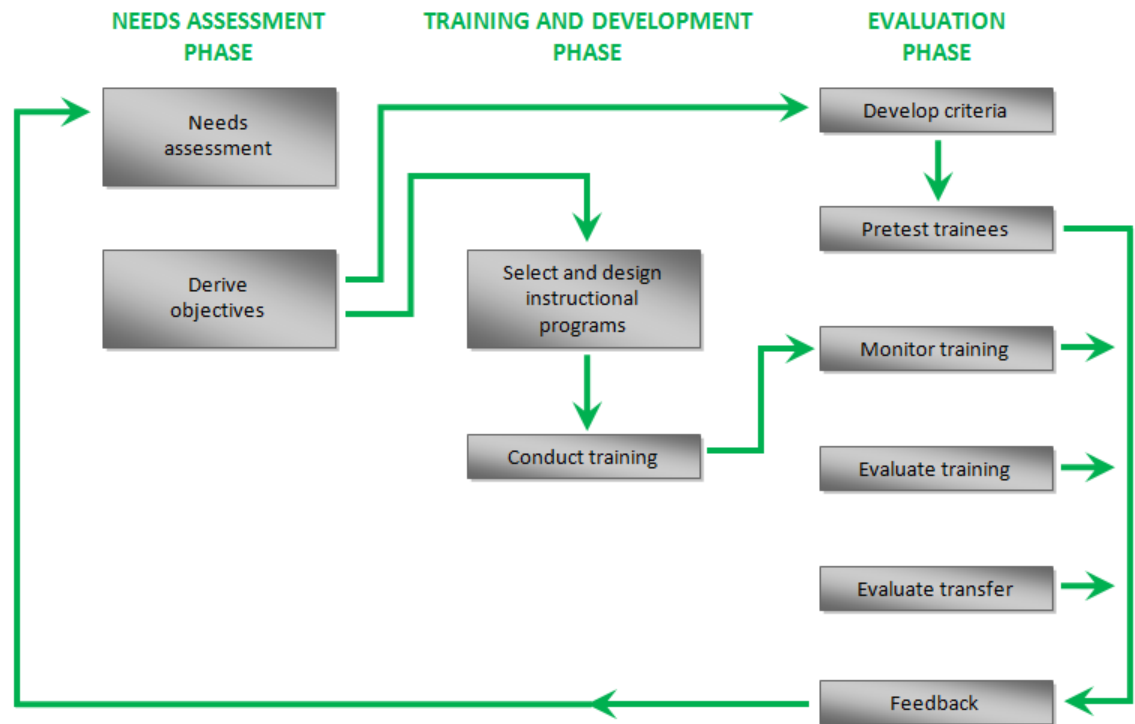


Figure 2.1 Goldstein Systematic Training Model
(Adapted from Hornsby & Kuratko 2002.)

Cascio (2010, 295) adopts the same model and he believes that the needs assessment phase serves as a foundation for the entire training efforts. The training and development phase and the evaluation phase depend heavily on inputs from the previous phase. The needs assessment phase is meant to define what the employee should learn in order to perform the desired job behaviors. This phase must be carefully done; otherwise, the training program as a whole will not be able to achieve its goal. When the training and development objectives are already stated, the managers can decide what methods should be used to accomplish those objectives. The managers must continuously evaluate training and development to ensure its value in achieving organizational objectives (Mondy et al. 2002, 219). According to Cascio (2010, 294) the assessment phase and the training and development phase should be done competently, in order not to cause problems for evaluation. The evaluation phase involves establishing indicators of success in training, as well as on the job, and determining exactly what job-related changes have occurred as a result of the training. The managers will later reassess the training needs based on the feedback of the evaluation phase, and therefore create input for the next stage of employee development.

3.2.1 Assessing Needs and Establishing Objectives

If the company currently has no training and development program, the first step is to conduct a needs analysis. If such a program already exists, the company should analyze it to see whether or not organizational goals are being met. Once the needs have been established, the managers should determine specific goals which are observable and measurable. These objectives are based upon the tasks the trainee is expected to perform and the knowledge, skills and abilities that the trainee is supposed to have after the training is completed. Hornsby & Kuratko (2002, 129) stress that the more precise these objectives are, the more likely it is that a successful contribution will be made to the organization. According to Mondy et al. (2002, 220-221) the needs analysis should cover several perspectives including the organization, the tasks, and the people. From the organizational perspective, the firm's strategic mission, goals, corporate plans and the results of human resource planning should be studied. As for the task analysis, important sources of data include job descriptions, performance appraisals, and interviews or surveys of supervisors. Finally, the managers should address the training needs at an individual level, asking such questions as "Who needs to be trained?" and "What kind of training is needed?". Adding to the concerns for needs assessment, Bohlander et al. (2001, 225) presents a drawback. Managers frequently complain that "they simply don't have time to conduct needs assessment". However, as the speed of change increases, the importance of needs assessment also increases; because if employees do not receive effective training, they will perform poorly on the job, which will be a significant loss for the organization.

3.2.2 Designing and Implementing Training Programs

Mondy et al. (2002, 232) presents a few difficulties in implementing a training and development program. One reason is that managers are typically action-oriented and feel that they are too busy for training and development. Another difficulty is that qualified trainers must be available. However, it is not enough to possess communication skills; the trainers must know the company's philosophy, its objectives, its formal and informal information, and the goals of the training program. The third problem is that training implies change, which employees may strongly

resist. Therefore, participant feedback is very necessary at this stage. It may also be difficult to schedule the training as each employee has specific full-time duties to perform. A well-planned training program can fail if the managers cannot convince the participants of its merits by making them believe that the program will help them achieve their personal and professional goals. Mondy et al. (2002, 232) goes on and concludes that “training and development requires more creativity than perhaps any other human resource function”.

Hornsby & Kuratko (2002, 129-130) provide a clear picture of the training and development phase, stating that it focuses on the selection and design of instructional programs and conducting the actual training (Figure 2.1). Instructional design activities include using traditional principles of learning and selecting appropriate training media. Hornsby & Kuratko (2002) also give a list of learning principles including goal setting, behavioral modeling, meaningfulness of material, practice, and feedback. As for training methods, two types of techniques which are on-the-job training and off-the-job training should be applied. The principles of learning which help enhance the learning process are explained in the following table (Table 2.1) whereas the training methods will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

Learning principle	Explanation
Goal setting	Hornsby & Kuratko (2002, 130) state that an individual’s conscious goals or intentions govern his or her behavior. In order for the desired behavior to be achieved, the objectives which are set must be clear, concise, and specified to occur within a specific time frame. For an individual to achieve personal satisfaction, goals should be challenging and difficult, but obtainable as they will result in higher levels of performance. During training, trainers should use informal checkpoints such as quizzes and evaluations to let trainees feel successful or enable them to see areas that need improvement to reach the final goal.
Behavior modeling	According to Hornsby & Kuratko (2002, 130) the use of behavior modeling enables trainees to learn by observing others as it focuses on specific successful behavior. The models’

	<p>actions are seen as what constitute appropriate behavior. Cascio (2010, 300) notes that a model is someone seen as competent, powerful, and friendly, and who has a high status within an organization. If the firm's managers are trainers themselves, then they should also act as models whose behavior must always be seen as desirable and appropriate. Hornsby & Kuratko (2002) add that using a reward system during training will increase the desired behavior that is wished to reinforce.</p>
Meaningfulness of material	<p>If the material is meaningful to the trainees, they will remember the information more easily. At the beginning of the training course, an overview of its content must be given to the trainees. Examples, terms, and concepts used in the material must be familiar to and understood by them using their previous knowledge and skills. Hornsby & Kuratko (2002, 131) add that reinforcement should be on key learning points and start with simple skills first before moving to more complex skills.</p>
Practice	<p>According to Hornsby & Kuratko (2002, 131) practice is "an essential component of any program designed to teach a new skill". The trainer should observe trainees in practice sessions and make suggestions to improve their behavior. Cascio (2010, 302) states that when trainees are given the opportunity to practice far beyond the point where they have performed a task correctly several times, the task becomes their "second nature" and is "overlearned". When that happens, the length of time the training material will be retained is increased, the task becomes automatic even under stressful situations, and transfer of training to on-the-job situations is facilitated (Hornsby & Kuratko, 2002).</p>
Feedback	<p>Feedback is very important in the learning process as it increases the trainees' motivation. The trainer uses feedback to give direct information that helps the trainee make correct adjustments, which helps reinforce accurate behavior. Feedback should be given immediately after the trainee's action. Hornsby & Kuratko (2002) state that "success in achieving a desired</p>

	behavior increases the willingness of the trainee to learn”.
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Table 2.1 Principles of Learning

(See Hornsby & Kuratko 2002.)

3.2.3 Evaluating Training Programs

To maintain the first two phases of training and development in an on-going and effective manner, it is necessary that the managers evaluate the value of the training program at every step. Hornsby & Kuratko (2002, 135) define evaluation as “a process of appraising something carefully to determine its value”. Four levels of evaluation should be considered. Hornsby & Kuratko (2002, 135-136) also explain these levels which are reactions, learning, behavior, and results. Participant reactions, which are the simplest and easiest form of evaluation, involve their feelings about important elements of the training program and can be assessed using different types of survey. Learning evaluations include an assessment of whether or not the participant has learned the ideas, facts, and/or processes taught in the training program. Behavior evaluations assess whether or not the participant has incorporated learned facts and processes in performing the job. Finally, results evaluations involve the measurement of bottom-line results such as increased sales, decreased mistakes, etc. Cascio (2010, 309) suggests some questions to which trainers should seek answers to, in order to assess the utility or value of training:

- Have trainees achieved a specific level of skill, knowledge, or performance?
- Did change occur?
- Is the change due to training?
- Is the change positively related to the achievement of organizational goals?
- Will similar changes occur with new participants in the same training program?

3.3 Planning Management Training

There have been several arguments about the actual results of management training and how effectively managers can apply what they have learned in training to on-the-job situations. Graham & Bennett (1998, 309) state that management training has few practical applications as it encourages technical specialization rather than the overall

ability to lead and creates unrealistic job and career expectations among junior managerial employees. Other arguments stated by Graham & Bennett (1998) include that the environments in which trainings take place are often artificial and too different from real life situations, and that most aspects of management can only be learned by doing, and it is almost impossible to design courses that comprehensively cover the entire management field as the dimensions of managerial competence include a vast range of tasks. A highlighted fact is that “individuals enter management in so many different ways and from such varied backgrounds that no single program of studies can meet the highly specified needs of each participant” (Graham & Bennett 1998, 310). Adding to the argument is the concern that management is a subject so fast changing that the contents of any management training course could quickly become obsolete and irrelevant to the current underlying management principles to which sufficient attention must be devoted.

Being one who has been responsible for planning and implementing management training programs, Sydänmaanlakka (2005, 75) states that after the training course, the trainees usually admit that they can remember very little of what they have learnt and that they can apply very little of it in practice. The reason can be that the training was too theoretical and difficult to be applied in practice or that the trainees do apply more in practice than they can actually recall. Trying to increase the effectiveness of management training, Sydänmaanlakka (1992) has developed a model for planning it (Figure 2.2).

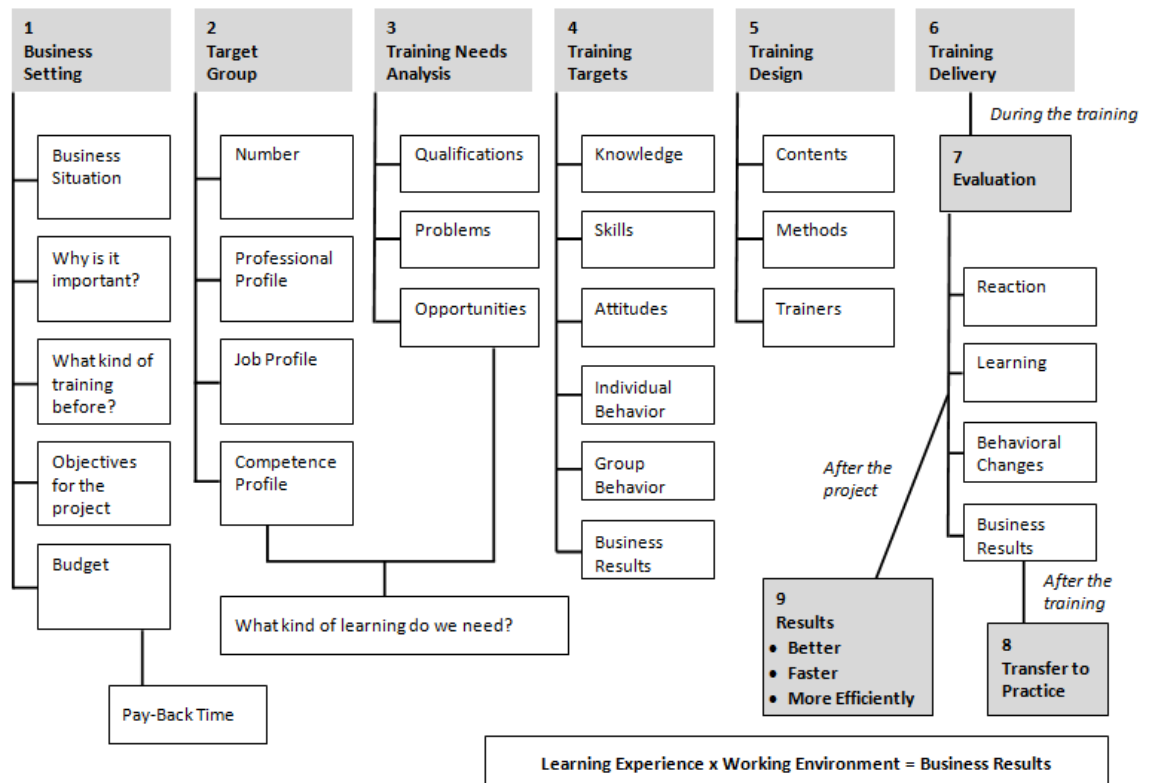


Figure 2.2 Model for Planning Management Training

(Adapted from Sydänmaanlakka 2005.)

The model has ten major steps which are summed up as follows. Before starting the training program, the trainer needs to carry out a careful analysis of the business setting. If first-line managers are to be trained, middle management, perhaps along with top management, is responsible for this analysis. This step is similar to the organization analysis in the needs assessment phase of the Goldstein model (Figure 2.1), but Sydänmaanlakka (2005, 77) explains in more detail what exact information the trainer must pay attention to. Firstly, middle management must figure out the goals of the training, why training first-line managers is important and what is to be attained with it, what kind of training has been received earlier and how it has been utilized; but most importantly, middle management must evaluate "whether training is the correct solution in the first place". Training is not some instant magic trick that can remedy anything; in fact, it is usually expensive and takes up a lot of the participants' time. For that reason, middle management also needs to consider the costs and the benefits of the training and when these benefits can be achieved, in order to determine the right budget for the training program.

According to Sydänmaanlakka (2005) the second step involves "a careful definition of the target group". Middle management must identify the size of the group as well as the personal, job and qualification profiles of the first-line managers to be trained. The personal profile should include basic educational level, age distribution, work experience, motivation level, among other things. More important is the current competence profile of the target group, or in other words, the participants' current work performance. In analyzing training needs, which is the third step, middle management must identify the gap between the present and the desired competence, and the problems that are expected to be solved. Middle management should ask themselves what the reasons for the problems could be, and how training could eliminate it. Training may also bring other benefits that the trainer has not expected; middle management should also determine these new opportunities so as not to miss any of them.

Concrete training targets are what middle management must determine in the fourth step. Middle management must examine how the training will influence knowledge, skills, attitudes, individual and group behavior, and business results (Sydänmaanlakka 2005, 78). Only when the first four steps are fully completed can middle management start designing the content of training and selecting training methods and trainers. After that, the training is delivered. However, knowledge acquired in training does not become competence before it has been applied in practice. Therefore, middle management must remember that active planning and support is absolutely mandatory in this step. Middle management must keep in mind the principles of learning discussed in the previous section to make sure that planning and support is ongoing throughout the program. The next step is evaluation of training. Sydänmaanlakka (2005) notes that the outcomes must be analyzed systematically and based on four levels including reactions, learning, behavioral changes, and business results. These criteria are similar to those in the evaluation phase of the Goldstein model (Figure 2.1) which was discussed in the previous section. Sydänmaanlakka (2005) states that "emphasis needs to be placed on what happens before and after [the training]". However, middle management should keep in mind that the real outcome and the impact of training are rather difficult to be measured; therefore, they should carefully keep their focus on these matters.

3.4 Training Methods for First-line Managers

Methods which are used for training first-line managers must be chosen carefully. The trainer must be aware of the participants' much varied personal backgrounds which lead to their different levels of current knowledge, skills and ability to comprehend the content of the training. Commonly, management training programs can be conducted by professional organizations from outside or by managers and trainers inside the company. Mondy & Noe (2005, 218-219) mentioned several advantages of each approach which are listed in the following table (Table 2.2).

Outsourced	In-house
An outside perspective, New viewpoints, Exposure to faculty experts and research, Broader vision.	Training that is more specific to needs, Lower cost and less time, Consistent, relevant material, More control of content and faculty, Development of organizational culture and teamwork.

Table 2.2 Advantages of Outsourced vs. In-house Development Programs

(See Mondy & Noe 2005.)

Some concerns about the selection of training methods have been raised. According to Graham & Bennett (1998, 307-308), letting external organizations arrange the company's management training programs appears to be losing favor "because they are unable to take into account a company's particular systems, traditions or general management style". In-company programs are becoming more and more popular, especially those including a team or a whole department of people who normally work together. However, it is difficult in practice to let the whole team or department take a training course at the same time unless it is organized outside normal working hours. Concerning the participants' different levels of current knowledge, skills and ability to comprehend the content of the training, the selection of training media must also be done carefully. Some available and possible methods for training first-line managers are listed below.

On-the-job Experiences

According to Bohlander et al. (2001, 245-246) on-the-job experiences are some of the most powerful and commonly used techniques since they give managers the opportunities to perform under pressure and to learn from their mistakes. On-the-job management training should be well organized, supervised, and challenging to the participants. Bohlander et al. (2001) goes on and presents several methods to provide on-the-job experiences:

- Coaching involves a continuing flow of instructions, comments, and suggestions from the manager to the subordinate.
- Understudy assignments groom an individual to take over a manager's job by gaining experience in handling important functions of the job.
- Job rotation provides, through a variety of work experiences, the broadened knowledge and understanding required to manage more effectively.
- Action learning gives managers release time to work full-time on projects with others in the organization. In some cases, action learning is combined with classroom instruction, discussions, and conferences.
- Staff meetings enable participants to become more familiar with problems and events occurring outside their immediate area by exposing them to the ideas and thinking of other managers.

Seminars and Conferences

Seminars and conferences often take the form of classroom instructions. The advantage of seminars and conferences is that they bring groups of people together for training. In management training, it can be used to communicate ideas, policies, or procedures, and/or to discuss issues which have no set answers or solutions. For this reason, this method is often used when the company's goal is changing attitude. (Bohlander et al. 2001, 247.)

Case Study

When describing the case study method in detail, Dessler (2004, 171-172) states that it first presents a trainee with a written description of an organizational problem and

then lets him or her analyze the case in private and diagnose the problem before presenting his or her findings and solutions in a discussion with other trainees. According to Dessler (2004) this method has several aims; for example, it gives trainees “realistic experience in identifying and analyzing complex problems in an environment in which their trained discussion leader can subtly guide their progress”. Through the guided discussion, trainees will learn that there are different ways to approach and solve problems of the company. They will also learn that different needs and values often lead to different solutions.

Role Playing

In role playing, the trainees play different roles, assuming the attitudes and behaviors of others, often a supervisor and a subordinate who are involved in a particular problem. By looking at the problem from one another’s perspective, participants can improve their ability to understand and cope with others or to counsel others. According to Bohlander et al. (2001, 249-250) a role play is a versatile teaching method, applicable to a variety of training experiences as it helps train managers to handle different employee issues from absenteeism or performance appraisal to conflict situations. If a role play is planned and implemented correctly, it can “bring realism and insight into dilemmas and experiences that otherwise might not be shared”.

Behavior Modeling

Dessler (2004, 173-174) brings out the meaning of behavior modeling by explaining that it involves showing trainees the right way of doing something, letting each of them practice the right way to do it, and giving feedback regarding each trainee’s performance. The basic behavior modeling procedure consists of four major steps: (1) modeling, (2) role playing, (3) social reinforcement, and (4) transfer of training. To strengthen the idea, Bohlander et al. (2001, 250) states that the behavior modeling technique is one which combines several different training methods and multiple principles of learning. Many studies have proved the effectiveness of this technique, demonstrating its success in training managers to interact with employees, handle discipline, introduce change, and increase productivity.

According to Hornsby & Kuratko (2002, 133-134) most importantly, the trainer needs to make sure that the methods chosen will accomplish the following:

- Motivate the trainees to improve or change to the desired performance;
- Clearly illustrate desired skills needed;
- Provide adequate participation and practice for the trainees;
- Provide feedback and reinforcement when the desired behaviors are exhibited;
- Show how to adapt to change and handle problems as they arise;
- Be structured to go from simple to complex tasks or behaviors;
- Encourage the trainees so that positive transfer from training to the job situation occurs.

4 RESEARCH PROCESS

This chapter will start with a brief introduction of Company X's operations and other relevant matters about the company. Its current situation will be discussed in a critical manner in order to highlight the underlying problems in the composition of its workforce which is rather diverse and which may affect significantly the quality of work. After that, the research methods will be discussed. In this research, I will use both the quantitative and the qualitative methods. With the use of the survey, the quantitative method will help find out the current situation of the first-line managers' management skills. Meanwhile, the qualitative method is to help understand the middle management's expectations of the first-line managers in managing the staff. I will interview the Senior Sales Manager, who is responsible for overseeing the work performance of the whole studied department, in order to answer one of my research questions and to help the whole research be more in-depth. The questionnaire and the interview questions will also be introduced in this chapter, followed by the discussion on the approaches to collect data and to analyze the data collected.

4.1 Target Organization: Company X

Company X is a fully foreign-owned life insurer in Vietnam. Company X is a limited company established in 1999 and has been active in the Vietnamese market for

thirteen (13) years. The company utilizes the network marketing model and has 17 offices in 13 cities or provinces with over 11,000 financial agents nationwide. According to Barber (1994, 12) traditional companies employ sales people to generate sales, each in a strictly defined local area, which means that a traditional sales person would have his or her own exclusive area, in which other people would not be allowed to sell, and would not be allowed to sell in another sales person's area either. Meanwhile, "a company using network marketing as its chain of distribution gives individuals the right to handle its products by setting up their businesses with only national geographic boundaries" (Barber 1994). This gives the distributors the freedom to advertise the products in their own way, close the sales deals in their own way, recruit new people in their own way, and motivate their people in their own way. The distributor, in this situation, almost acts like an entrepreneur, or a leader, or a general manager and must have management skills to lead his or her people. The advantage of working for such a company is that the distributor can run what is almost a complete enterprise without having to actually come up with any special product or spend a huge amount of money on marketing, because the mother company has already done that for them.

A traditional company and a company applying network marketing differ mostly in the sales department while the upper management systems are still the same. The management system of the company can be understood as follows:

- The top management includes the CEO – General Director, followed by the Chief Operations Officer, the Chief Financial Officer, and the Chief Agency Officer;
- The so-called middle-level management includes the Senior Sales Managers (SSM), each of whom is the head of one or more areas, the Sales Managers (SM), and the Assistant Sales Managers (ASM);
- The first-line managers are those under the supervision of the SSM and each of them has a team of subordinates. The first-line management includes the following managerial positions:
 - Area Manager (AM);
 - Branch Manager (BM);
 - Senior District Manager (SDM);
 - District Manager (DM);

- Senior Unit Manager (SUM);
- Unit Manager (UM);
- Trainee Unit Manager (TUM).

The product that Company X is offering is life insurance, which the company's sales agents call an "intangible product". Life insurance is not something one can touch, see, smell or taste, but having a life insurance may make a person feel safer, and buying life insurance for family members shows love and care for the family. However, the Vietnamese people do not have a nice feeling towards life insurance; to them, it is more of a financial service which brings much lower interests than saving money in banks. The negative feeling might also have been a result from poor services provided or scandals caused by some other company in the same industry. It is the sales people's job to make the customers understand the benefits that their service can offer. To do so successfully, it is required of the sales people to have good product knowledge and selling skills. The company does offer training courses to employees as they start working as financial agents; however, it is a continuous job of the first-line managers to share knowledge and skills to help the subordinates do their work more efficiently and effectively, which calls for excellent training and coaching skills from the manager. As another result of the customers' feeling towards life insurance, some agents may not feel proud of being employees in a company providing such service; some people work here just because they are desperate about making money since the entry requirements are not so high. It is very important that the first-line managers make their subordinates understand the essence of their job and make them believe in the company's products and services; only then can they perform their jobs successfully. Therefore, the first-line managers need good skills in motivating the employees.

Unlike any traditional company, utilizing the network marketing model to sell their products and manage their employees, Company X offers very fair chances of development for all the agents in accordance with their performance. In a traditional company, each level in the management system is usually held by only one person. In Company X, an agent who brings in a certain amount of sales or recruits a certain number of new agents is automatically promoted to a certain higher level in the first-line management system. In short, agents are promoted to a higher title in the first-line

management according to their sales and other achievements for the company in material terms. They can reach a higher position only by industriously selling the products and recruiting new agents. There is simply no training course to provide all the necessary management skills for those agents who have earned the titles of first-line managers. While the promotion of middle managers takes into account their performance and management qualifications, there is a lack of management skills among the first-line managers. The lack of management skills from the first-line managers keeps them from controlling, motivating, taking care of and paying attention to their agents in an efficient and effective way.

The entry requirements to become a financial agent in Company X are not so high. The selection criteria are different for different age groups of the applicants: Applicants from 18 to 24 years old are required to have a university or college degree or to have graduated from a vocational high school; applicants from 25 to 30 years old only need a high school degree; applicants from 31 to 34 years old are only expected to have a junior high school degree; and there are no minimum requirements on education for applicants over 35 years old. This can be some questionable selection criteria adopted by the company because the company cannot be sure that the applicants' abilities to comprehend new knowledge and learn new skills are at the same level. The recruitment procedures start with a career orientation seminar, where the applicants will be provided with necessary information about as well as the opportunities created by the job. The candidates will then take a 40-hour training program which is designed to help them gain knowledge to pass the compulsory test and achieve the certificate of insurance sales in Vietnam.

It is true that the Senior Sales Manager and the first-line managers make a lot of efforts to offer support to their subordinates, in order to help them feel confident to start their businesses and to overcome the obstacles to achieve success in their jobs. However, as the agents come from too various backgrounds, so do the first-line managers. This and the lack of management skills mentioned above lead to different levels of motivation among different working units. The motivating factors in one working unit differ dramatically from those in another, which all depend on the first-line managers' skills. One first-line manager knows how to plan ahead for the next month or quarter, how to set sales targets for groups and individuals, how to listen to

their agents to find out their difficulties and give them advice or solutions, but it does not mean that other first-line managers do too. This stresses the utmost importance to provide them with training to ensure all the first-line managers possess sufficient and equal management skills.

4.2 Research Methods

Every research studying people's opinions, feelings, experiences or behavior is likely to follow one of two distinct paths, which are usually referred to as quantitative research and qualitative research (Davies 2007, 9). In order to choose the right and wise method to be applied, the definitions and purposes of the two methods must be understood clearly. The following paragraphs explain the meaning and the use of each method, and how the two methods can be combined.

According to Davies (2007, 9) the purpose of quantitative research is to seek answers to questions through the application of scientific procedures. These procedures are developed in order make sure that the information collected will be relevant to the question asked and will be reliable and unbiased. There is no guarantee that any given research undertaking actually will produce relevant, reliable and unbiased information. However, scientific research procedures are more likely to do so than any other method. (Selltiz et al 1965, 2.)

On the other hand, Davies (2007, 10) describes qualitative research as "a situated activity that locates the observer in the world". It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible by turning it into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (Denzin and Lincoln 2003, 4.)

Qualitative and quantitative research methods can be combined as they complete each other. The purpose of such a combination may be additive, with different methods addressing different sub-topics, or interactive, with the same sub-topic being approached from different angles. (Bloor and Wood 2006, 116.) The combined

method is the one I will use to carry out my research. The quantitative method will be applied to find out the current situation of the first-line managers' management skills in the studied department. The qualitative method is used to understand the middle management's expectations of the first-line managers and to build the foundation for a future training program as the interviewee will be asked about his or her opinions on how well the first-line managers are performing their jobs, how to improve their performance, and which management skills are essential and useful for them.

Data is the raw material of a research in order for conclusions about the addressed issue to be drawn. According to Walliman (2011, 69) data come in two main forms, depending on its closeness to the event recorded. Primary data are those which have been observed, experienced or recorded close to the event and are "the nearest one can get to the truth", while secondary data are written sources that interpret or record primary data and tend to be less reliable. However, collecting primary data is time-consuming and not always possible due to various barriers. The data which will be produced from my research are primary data. Primary data can be collected using several methods such as asking questions, conducting interviews, observing without getting involved, or immersing oneself in a situation, and so on (Walliman 2011, 92).

The approaches to collect data that I will use include observation, survey, and interviewing. By using a questionnaire, I seek answers from the participants to questions such as how effectively the first-line managers are performing in terms of applying their current management skills, how satisfied the employees and first-line managers are with themselves and with their direct managers, what their expectations are from their direct managers in term of management skills, and so on. The questionnaire will be introduced later in this chapter. The survey with the questionnaire will be carried out first and preceded by a face-to-face interview with the Senior Sales Manager, who belongs to the middle management and is responsible for overseeing the work in the researched department. The interview is semi-structured. The interviewed manager will first be given a list of questions via e-mail, in which he or she is asked to assess the current situation of the first-line managers' management skills. The manager and I will then discuss the results; in this discussion, I will ask questions to find out the cause of his or her opinion, such as why some particular skills are so important while some others are not, what incidents he or she

has known, which lead to his or her idea that first-line managers should be given training to possess a particular management skill, and finally what his or her expectations are of the first-line managers. However, before getting to the survey and the interview, I will spend one day to observe the activities in the office in order to get to know the working culture of the employees in the department, including how employees react in different situations and how first-line managers influence the work environment.

Davies (2007, 55) states that in survey research, the 'population' is the category of people about whom the researcher intends to write in the report and from which he or she plans to draw the sample. The total number of employees in the researched department is approximately 500, which means that the population in this case is 500 people. Due to the time limit and the purpose of a bachelor thesis, it is not possible to carry out a survey with such a big number of participants; therefore, the sample I choose is 20 percent of the population, making it 100 participants who will take part in the survey research. Bloor and Wood (2006, 153) state that sampling methods fall into two broad types: probability and non-probability sampling. The sampling method I choose is random sampling, which is a part of probability sampling. The principle of random sampling is that every case in the population has an equal and non-zero chance of being selected to be part of the sample. The sample drawn from the population by this method is called a convenience sample. Applying this method, I will inform all the employees beforehand about the date on which I will carry out the survey. On that pre-determined date, I will ask a random 100 employees, regardless of their age group, gender, or managerial position in the department, to participate in the survey.

By convenience sampling (or accidental sampling) I have no control over who falls into the sample and cannot know in advance to what extent the information I can get or the opinions that will be expressed. Although it is not possible to reflect the total 'population' by using convenience sampling, it is impossible to apply non-probability sampling method in this case as the 'population' is rather large and there is no accessible information about its composition based on the employees' age groups, genders, or educational levels. As a matter of fact, it is impossible to draw a sample, for example, based on the proportions of different age groups or the proportions of male and female employees. However, the advantage of convenience sampling in this

case is that the data collected will be richer as the participants have so varied backgrounds that the opinions of employees from the same age groups are not even predictable.

4.3 Introduction of the Questionnaire

As mentioned previously, I will use a questionnaire to collect data on the employees' opinions about their direct managers. The questionnaire given to the participants starts with a consent letter to be signed by them. One copy of the letter is attached with the questionnaire paper and will be kept by me. Another separate copy to be signed by both parties, including each individual participant and myself, is for them to keep. The consent letter informs them about the party who carries out the research, the purpose of the research, how long it will take them to complete the questionnaire, what knowledge they will need to answer the questions, the risks and the benefits involved, the confidentiality of the information collected from the questionnaire, and the voluntariness of their participation. Also given in the consent letter is my contact information in case the participants have any personal questions or concerns that need addressing and answering.

I also ask for the participants' general information at the beginning of the questionnaire. This information includes each participant's gender, age group, level of education, whether this is their only job or a second job, whether this is their first job or they also have previous working experience. These details are important in a way that they influence an individual's ability to comprehend and learn new knowledge or to take in and apply new skills. They also influence the way an individual may observe, analyze and judge the environment surrounding him- or herself. Men and women may accept or apply different ways to manage and be managed. Middle-aged employees may feel more secure working with and put more trust in a manager who seems direct and gives structural instructions; meanwhile, young employees may need more space to explore themselves and to be creative in their work. Employees with high levels of education and those with lower levels may look at management from different perspectives and their levels of education do affect the management styles that they prefer. Employees who have other jobs and only see working at this company as a second job may not care so much about their managers while employees working

full-time here may look for ways to construct a good working environment where they can build a future career. Employees with previous working experience may understand how good management looks like and may compare their current managers with their previous supervisors while employees whose first workplace this company is may not be able to do the same.

The questionnaire is originally prepared in English and will be translated into Vietnamese before the survey is conducted. The questionnaire given to the participants is the Vietnamese version. Both versions can be found in the Appendices of the thesis. There are 50 questions in the main part of the questionnaire, divided into eight sub-sections. The participants are not expected to answer any question by writing words; instead, 50 statements are given and the participants will choose to what extent they do agree or disagree with each statement. For each statement, the participant is asked to choose one answer that best describes their opinion on a scale from 1 to 5. The meaning of each choice in the scale is explained as follows:

- “1” means that all the situations that the participant has experienced defy the statement;
- “2” means that some or most of the situations that the participant has experienced defy the statement;
- “3” means that the participant’s experience is not sufficient to support or defy the statement;
- “4” means that some or most of the situations that the participant has experienced support the statement;
- “5” means that all the situations that the participant has experienced support the statement.

The eight sub-sections in the main part of the questionnaire are eight different sets of management skills that the company’s first-line managers should acquire and apply effectively in order for themselves and their subordinates to achieve the best of work performance. Those sets of skills are planning skills, organizing skills, directing skills, communication skills, motivation skills, training and coaching skills, evaluating skills, and technical knowledge and skills. The questionnaire is composed based on the subjective statements of the agent assigned by the department’s manager to assist me during the research. The language of the statements has been reproduced to become

softer rather than heavily judgmental so that it fits the manner of the research and avoids biases of the participants. The purpose of the questionnaire itself is to find out how effectively the first-line managers are performing from their subordinates' point of view. Looking at the first-line managers' performance from the middle management's point of view will be done through my personal interview with the headperson of the division, officially called the Senior Sales Manager, before I actually conduct the survey. A point to notice in the research is that one of the essential skills required of a first-line managers which is "controlling" has been replaced by "evaluating skills". The reason for this change is that the Vietnamese translation of "evaluating" somehow fits the manner of the working environment in the company more than "controlling". However, the essence of the skill remains the same, as the questions regarding evaluating skills ask the participants about the monitoring and evaluating skills of the first-line managers. Therefore, from this point onwards, "evaluating skills" can be understood as "controlling skills".

4.4 Introduction of the Interview Questions for the Senior Sales Manager

Applying the qualitative method, I will use the interviewing approach to collect data on the opinions of one member from the middle management about the first-line managers' management skills. The interview with the Senior Sales Manager (SSM) will be semi-structured. A preliminary questionnaire will be sent to the SSM several days before the interview can be conducted. The preliminary questionnaire is prepared in Vietnamese and will be sent to the SSM by e-mail. An English version with the SSM's answers is included in the Appendices of the thesis. Most of the questions in the questionnaire are based on those prepared for the survey. However, as the survey is meant for the employees, who are the subordinates of the first-line managers being studied, the questions in the preliminary questionnaire for the SSM are rewritten in a more suitable manner. Generally, the SSM will be asked to evaluate the current situation of the first-line managers in each set of management skills. The eight (08) sets of skills in question include planning skills, organizing skills, directing skills, communication skills, motivation skills, training and coaching skills, evaluating skills, and technical knowledge and skills.

A specific date for the interview will be set and agreed upon by both parties. Before that date, I will receive and study the results from the preliminary questionnaire and highlight the underlying problems in the studied department from a subjective viewpoint of both myself and the SSM. I will start the interview by giving some comments on the SSM's preliminary answers and the SSM will give more comments or insights on the matters. I will then present the matters which I think are the underlying problems in the department at the time and seek her agreement or confirmation. More questions will be elaborated during the interview; the focused purpose is to find out the middle management's, or specifically, the SSM's expectations from the first-line managers and what the first-line managers could do to perform their job as a manager more effectively.

4.5 Data Collection and Analysis

The first step of the research was the interview with the Senior Sales Manager (SSM). I came to the location of the department and had the first talk with the SSM, in which we were discussing what my research schedule would be like in order for her to know when to provide assistance. In order for the interview to be more in-depth, I had spent nearly four hours observing the department's general meeting and one team meeting before discussing the necessary matters with the SSM. The interview questions had been sent to her beforehand and she had also sent back her brief answers. During the interview, I found out from her which among the eight sets of skills are the most important and required in the department. The SSM also evaluated the current management skills of the first-line managers and explained to me her expectations of how her subordinates should work and behave.

I spent several days after the interview observing more meetings in different settings and led by different chairpeople. I observed nine meetings and the outcome of each meeting differed a lot from that of another, which means that the management skills of first-line managers vary a great deal. During those meetings, I also had a chance to observe the attitude of the employees and drew some conclusions from that.

Two days after the interview with the SSM, I came to one general meeting of the department and handed out the questionnaires to all the staff present, mostly those

who had a direct manager at the time (as some stated that they did not have a direct manager as their positions were too high). I came back and collected the questionnaire already answered one week later and the number of collected questionnaires was ninety (90), slightly below the expected number which was one hundred (100). I calculated the choices of the participants and used Microsoft Excel to analyze the results. The results were reported in percentages of the choices in each question and a column chart was produced for each question. The results will be reported and explained in detail in the chapter Findings.

There was a training course being organized for the Trainee Unit Managers (TUMs) during the time I was doing the research. I did not have a chance to sit in and observe the course because the entry was strictly for the members; however, I took my chance to talk to one participant who took the course and received some feedback from him about the training program. Additionally, I had an opportunity to go through the current training materials for managers at District, Branch and Area levels, and recognized some substantial endeavors from the company. My findings will be reported in the next chapter.

5 FINDINGS

In this chapter, the matters to be reported include the results from the interview with the SSM, the results from the survey, and the results from the observation at some meetings. The comments on the company's current training materials, results from the feedback on a training course, and results from the observation of employee attitude are included in the Appendix but not discussed in detail in this chapter. The findings were drawn from many of various sources to make sure that they were true and reflecting the reality. The current situation in the studied department was looked at from different perspectives. Most of my assumptions were confirmed to be true by the SSM and the SSM's comments were confirmed true by the employees' attitude and behaviors.

5.1 Results from the interview with the SSM

The interview with the SSM evolved around the current status of first-line managers' management skills in the department. Information was gathered to find out how well the first-line managers were applying those skills to manage their teams. The comments of the SSM on the current status of the eight sets of management skills are listed in Table 5.1 and the remarks from the interview are stated afterwards.

Planning skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not 100% first-line managers (FLMs) plan monthly activities in advance. - Not 100% FLMs disclose the meeting agenda before the meeting. - Not 100% FLMs analyze and discuss the content of the company's new announcements with their subordinates. - Not 100% FLMs help their subordinates create strategies to achieve monthly sales targets.
Organizing skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not 100% FLMs divide the sales targets at the beginning of the month so that their subordinates know the minimum sales that each of them must achieve by the end of the month. - All FLMs emphasize the importance of both selling and recruiting. - All FLMs succeed in solving all problems and difficulties in their own and their subordinates' work life.
Directing skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not 100% FLMs are willing to find out their subordinates' problems or difficulties when their work performance is not satisfactory. - Not 100% FLMs frequently advise their subordinates to increase work performance. - Not 100% FLMs hold weekly meetings on a regular basis.
Communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All FLMs are open and friendly to their subordinates. - All FLMs encourage their subordinates to be open about their own problems and difficulties so that help can be provided.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All FLMs listen to their subordinates' ideas and suggestions. - Not 100% FLMs prepare carefully their speeches before meetings. - All FLMs can present clearly all important matters in meetings. - Not 100% FLMs inform their subordinates about new announcements of the company.
Motivation skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All FLMs are always willing to help their subordinates. - All FLMs usually ask their subordinates about the subordinates' current problems and difficulties. - All FLMs orient their subordinates to aim for higher positions in their job. - Not 100% FLMs constantly find ways to help their subordinates. - All FLMs listen to their subordinates about the subordinates' problems and difficulties. - All FLMs reward the subordinates with good work performance. - All FLMs make their subordinates feel proud and committed to the company. - All FLMs have a learning spirit and are always willing to learn new things.
Training and coaching skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All FLMs give their subordinates useful advice and solutions to their problems. - All FLMs share their own working experience with their subordinates. - All FLMs train their subordinates on recruiting new agents but none of them succeed in doing so properly by organizing sessions or giving out materials, etc. - Not 100% FLMs try to find out which necessary skills are lacking from their subordinates. - All FLMs instruct their subordinates on skills necessary for their work.

Evaluating skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not 100% FLMs frequently monitor the work performance of their subordinates. - Not 100% FLMs evaluate the work performance. - Not 100% FLMs draw lessons from the work performance of themselves and their teams.
Technical knowledge and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All FLMs are able to answer quickly questions concerning product knowledge. - Not 100% FLMs possess necessary skills in information technology. - Not 100% FLMs can use the technical software fluently and successfully.

Table 5.1 The SSM's Comments on the First-line Managers' Management Skills

The four essential sets of skills for a first-line manager are planning skills, organizing skills, directing skills, and evaluating skills. If we look at these skills from the above table, we see that in planning, organizing, and evaluating, most first-line managers do not possess these skills sufficiently. Planning is the most critical skill for all working people, not just the first-line managers. We take it for granted that most employees are able to plan their own activities but in managing others, not all first-line managers are successful in doing so. Organizing skills seem better but the first point in this part in the table is related to planning. If the first-line managers fail to plan and divide the sales targets, it will lead to a chain reaction of failure in managing as they cannot monitor and evaluate the work performance of the team. Without planning properly, they also cannot direct their subordinates by telling them what to do next after one job is accomplished.

It is good that most first-line managers possess quite good soft skills (communication skills and motivation skills). They are supporting skills that are also important to first-line managers. Training and coaching skills are fine but first-line managers should take chances to train their subordinates properly on recruiting as all employees have already been trained very properly by the company on selling skills. The product knowledge of all first-line managers is excellent. The lack of skills in general knowledge about information technology can be acceptable; however, all first-line

managers should be able to use the technical software as it is one essential part of the job.

The most important point mentioned during the interview is that all first-line managers seem to plan but most of them cannot organize work activities according to their plan. Most of them do not stick to the plan and eventually do not reach the expected work performance. When asked by the supervisors, the phrase “we have tried our best” comes up as the answer to all problems. The SSM’s expectation is to train the first-line managers on how to plan and then constantly stick to the plan. Training them on evaluating work performance and the importance of evaluation comes as the second most important requirement.

5.2 Results from the survey

The questionnaire starts with the background information of each respondent. This information includes each participant’s gender, age group, level of education, whether this is their only job or a second job, whether this is their first job or they also have previous working experience. These details are important in a way that they influence an individual’s ability to comprehend and learn new knowledge or to take in and apply new skills. They also influence the way an individual may observe, analyze and judge the environment surrounding him- or herself. The information will be summarized and analyzed in the next sub-section.

There are 50 questions in the main part of the questionnaire, divided into eight sub-sections regarding eight different sets of management skills which are relevant in the studied department. The participants are not expected to answer any question by writing words; instead, 50 statements are given and the participants will choose to what extent they do agree or disagree with each statement. For each statement, the participant is asked to choose one answer that best describes their opinion on a scale from 1 to 5. The meaning of each choice in the scale is explained as follows:

- “1” means that all the situations that the participant has experienced defy the statement;
- “2” means that some or most of the situations that the participant has experienced defy the statement;

- “3” means that the participant’s experience is not sufficient to support or defy the statement;
- “4” means that some or most of the situations that the participant has experienced support the statement;
- “5” means that all the situations that the participant has experienced support the statement.

5.2.1 Background information

The number of male respondents makes up 33.33% while the percentage of female respondents is twice as much (Figure 5.1). This is somewhat relevant to the ratio between the number of the male employees and that of the female ones in the studied department, which is approximately 2:3, or 40% male : 60% female. As mentioned above, men and women may accept or apply different ways to manage and be managed; therefore, this information is important to training course organizers so that they can provide training courses with suitable training methods.

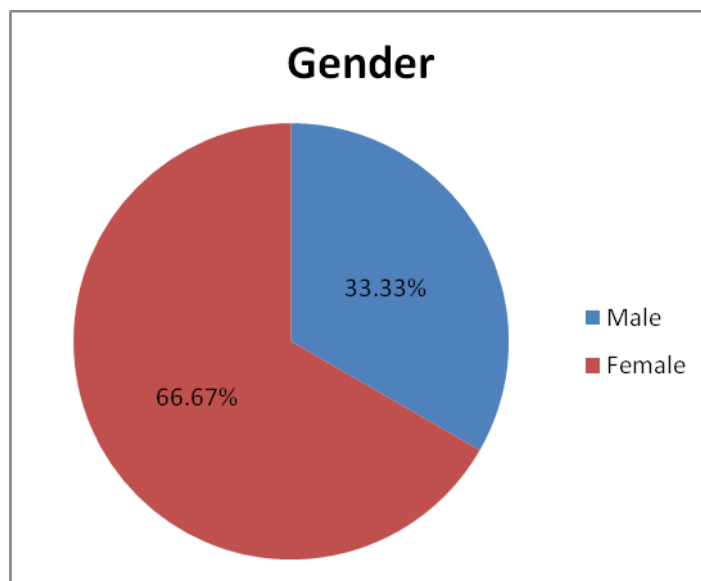


Figure 5.1 Pie Chart of the Respondents’ Genders

The majority of the respondents are from 46 to 55 years old, accounting for 44.44% of the sum. This is understandable as most of the employees in the studied department are female and middle-aged. The number of 36- to 45-year-old respondents makes up 22.22%, which equals to the number of those from 26 to 35 years old. The remaining 11.11% of the respondents are those from 18 to 25 years old. It is not so common for a

person to start his/her career in this company as it is not easy in general and requires some specific skills that come with experience from other sales jobs. (See Figure 5.2.)

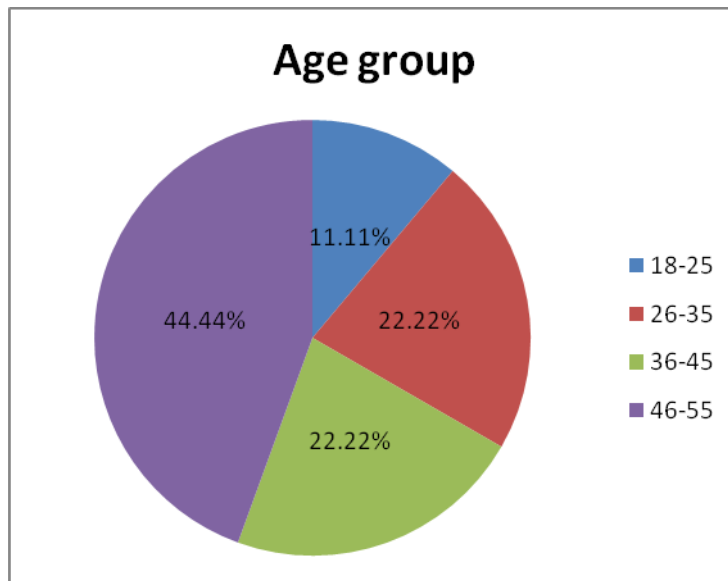


Figure 5.2 Pie Chart of the Respondents' Age Groups

There is no single respondent who has a higher degree in education than the college level to participate in this survey. More than a half of the respondents (66.67%) do not even have a college degree, while 33.33% of them listed college as their highest level of education (Figure 5.3). This is also a common situation in the studied department and the company has been making the job sound very attractive to many people as no special degree is needed, although a college degree can be preferred. However, because of the varied background of the employees, including the difference in their levels of education, training the managers or the employees in general can be a hard task for the company's trainers.

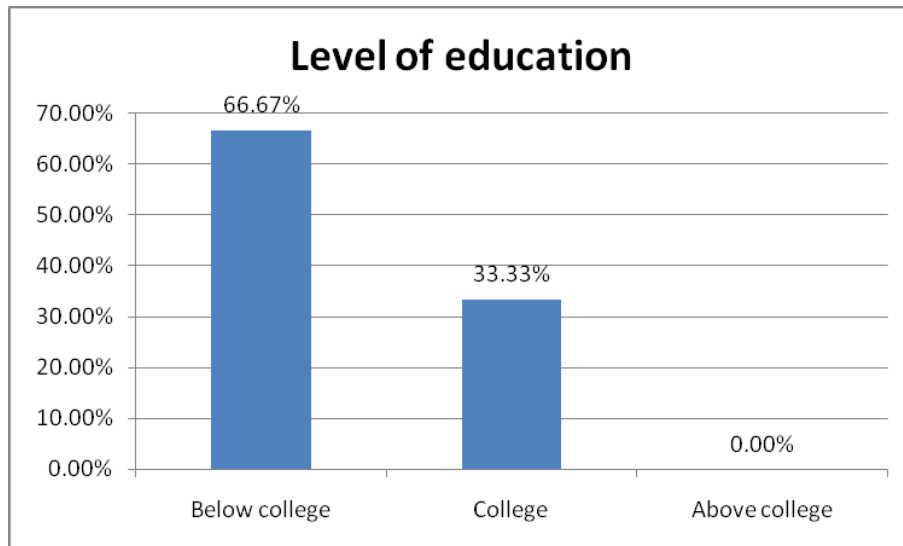


Figure 5.3 Column Chart of the Respondents' Levels of Education

As mentioned above, employees who have other jobs and only see working at this company as a second job may not care so much about their managers while employees working full-time here may look for ways to construct a good working environment where they can build a future career. The majority of the respondents (55.56%) answered that working in this company was their only job at the time the research was carried out, while less than a half of the respondents (44.44%) answered otherwise (Figure 5.4). It can be taken for granted most of the employees care about making the office a better place as a good working environment can be ideal for them to build a future career. However, as most of the employees are middle-aged, the situation can be slightly different since they may have their families to put more focus on or they may just work here because it is their sole option.

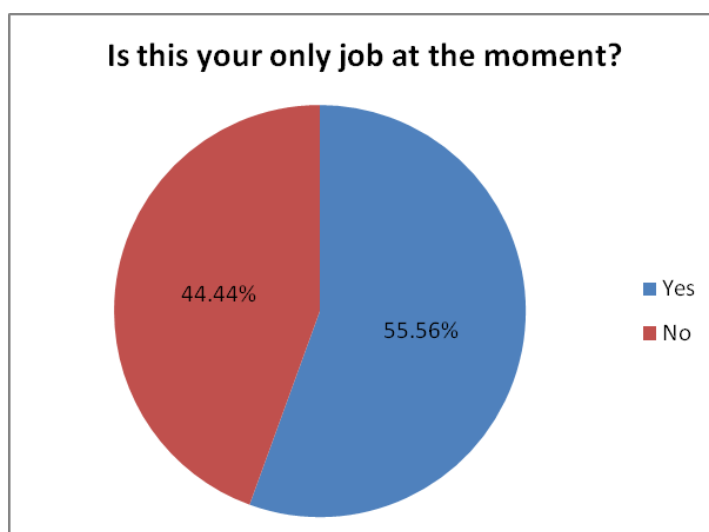


Figure 5.4 Pie Chart of the Respondents' Job Statuses 1

Almost all of the respondents (88.89%) answered that they had worked in other companies, while the remaining 11.11% of the respondents started their working life in this company (Figure 5.5). As mentioned above, employees with previous working experience may understand what good management is and may compare their current managers with their previous supervisors, while employees whose first workplace this company is may not be able to do the same. That can be true to some extent, but it also depends on various factors. Although the employees in the studied department may have worked in other companies before joining this one, it does not mean that they are fully aware of what to expect from their direct managers or what first-line managers must do and how they must do it. The results of the whole survey will show a clearer picture of the real situation in the studied department.

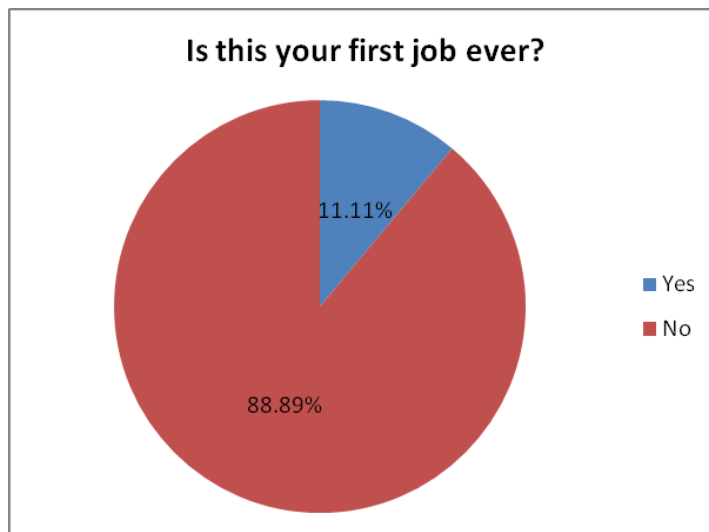


Figure 5.5 Pie Chart of the Respondents' Job Statuses 2

5.2.2 Planning skills

Statement 1: Your manager does not plan monthly activities clearly in advance.

Almost a half of the respondents (45.56%) totally disagree with the statement, which means that most first-line managers do plan monthly activities clearly in advance. However, some of them have not done that so thoroughly or adequately as 22.22% of the respondents somewhat agree and 13.33% of the respondents totally agree. (See Figure 5.6.)

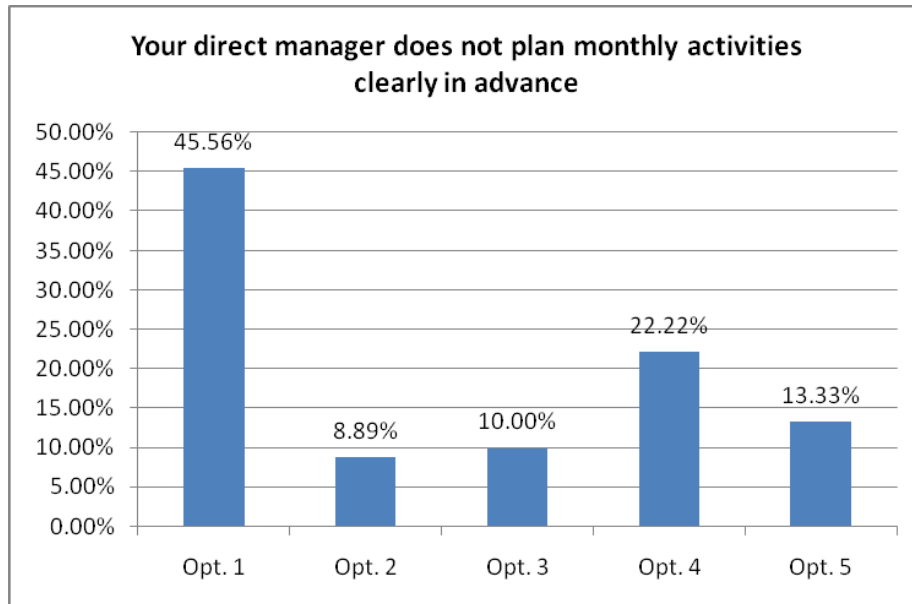


Figure 5.6 Result of Statement 1

Statement 2: Your direct manager does not disclose the meeting agenda to you before the meeting.

Almost a half of the respondents (42.22%) totally disagree that their direct managers do not disclose the meeting agenda to them before the meeting. 23.33% of the respondents somewhat disagree while another 25.56% totally agree. This means that first-line managers in the studied department do not work in the same way or the way expected by middle management. (See Figure 5.7.)

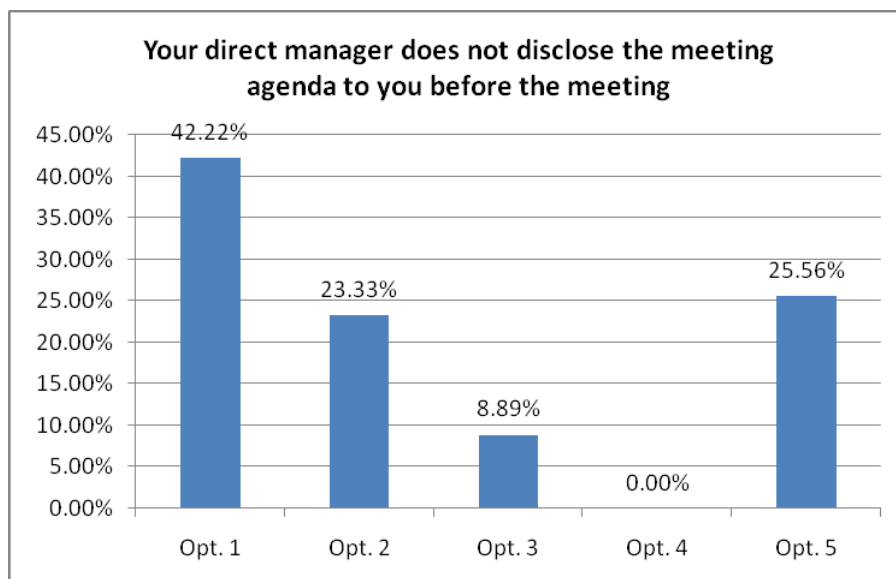


Figure 5.7 Result of Statement 2

Statement 3: Your direct manager does not analyze and discuss the content of new announcements with you.

Almost a half of the respondents (45.56%) totally disagree and another 31.11% somewhat disagree with the statement while only 11.11% of the respondents totally agree with it. This means that most first-line managers do analyze and discuss the content of the company's new announcements with their subordinates. In doing so, the manager makes sure that the subordinates know what is going on in the company so that they can plan the next step for themselves in the job and the manager him-/herself can forecast the work performance in a certain way. (See Figure 5.8.)

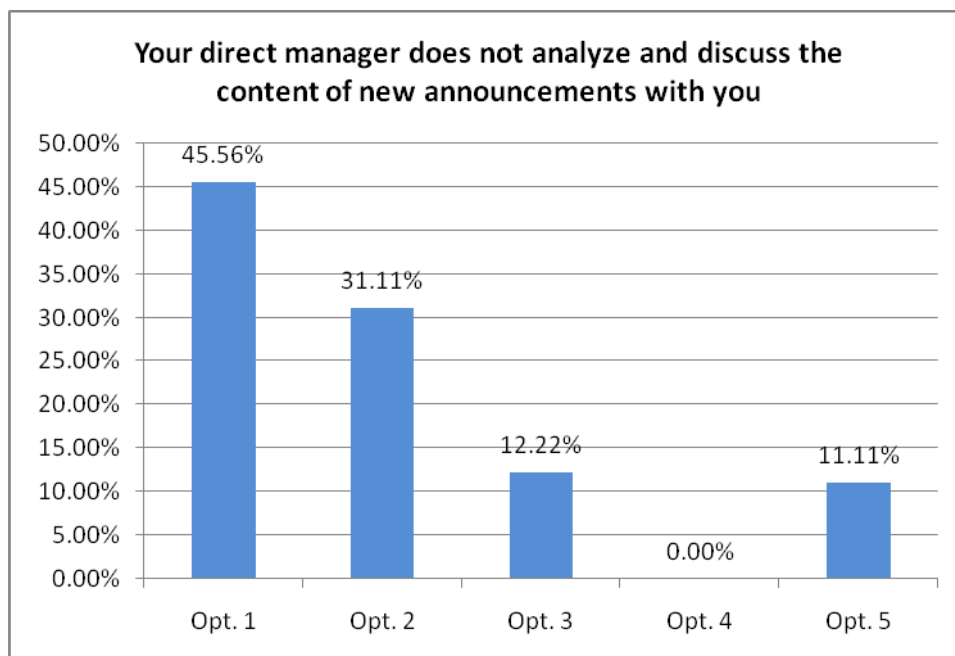


Figure 5.8 Result of Statement 3

Statement 4: Your direct manager does not analyze and discuss the content of new announcements with any other member of your team.

More than a half of the respondents (58.89%) totally agree and 21.11% of the respondents somewhat agree with the statement, meaning that most managers have succeeded in informing and discussing with their subordinates the company's new announcements. This will lead to positive work performance; however, there are still

an existing number of managers who have failed to do so, making 10.00% of the respondents totally agree with the statement. (See Figure 5.9.)

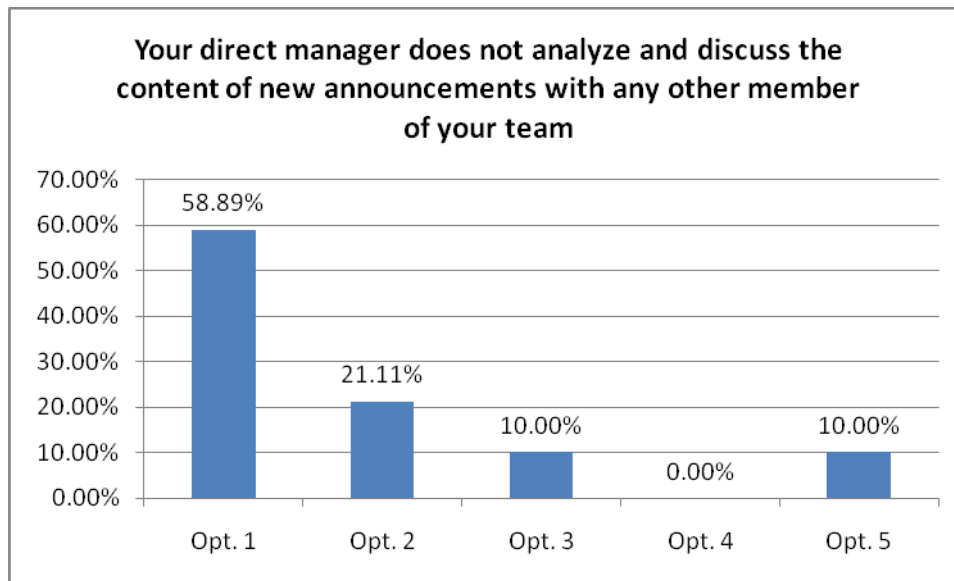


Figure 5.9 Result of Statement 4

Statement 5: Your direct manager does not help you create strategies to achieve your monthly sales targets.

More than a half of the respondents (56.67%) totally disagree with the statement while the remaining part of the respondents distribute almost equally for the four remaining options, including "somewhat disagree" (8.89%), "I have no idea" (13.33%), "somewhat agree" (10.00%), and "totally agree" (11.11%). Most respondents agree that their managers have sufficiently helped them create strategies to achieve their monthly sales targets. In doing so, first-line managers must have planned carefully and will bring positive results to the company. (See Figure 5.10.)

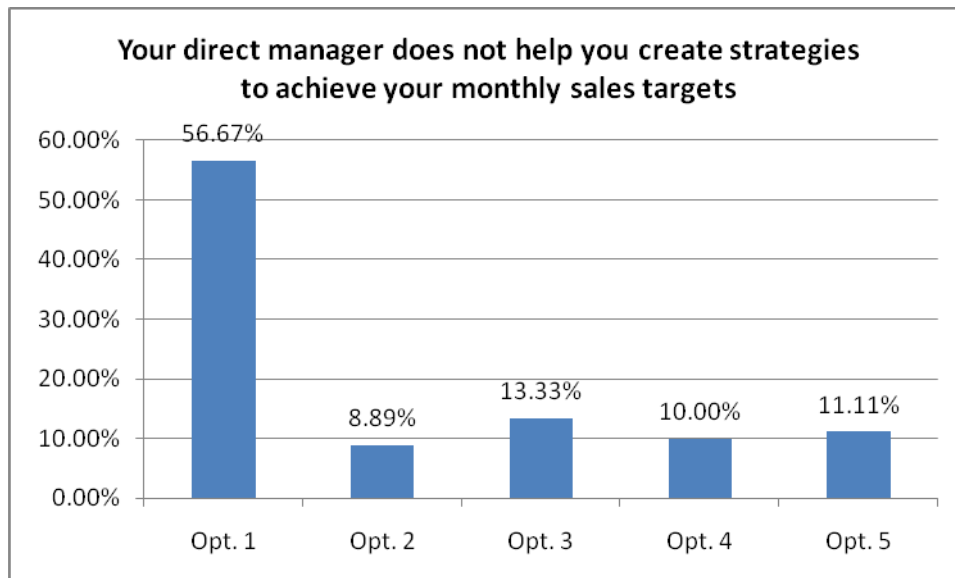


Figure 5.10 Result of Statement 5

5.2.3 Organizing skills

Statement 6: Your direct manager does not divide the sales targets at the beginning of the month.

Almost a half of the respondents (43.33%) somewhat disagree and 38.89% of the respondents totally disagree with the statement, meaning that most of them believe that their direct managers do divide the sales targets to the members of their teams at the beginning of the month. This reflects the somewhat good organizing skills of the first-line managers, which will bring positive work outcomes to the company. There are only a very small number of respondents (8.89%) who totally believe that their direct managers have not done so quite effectively. (See Figure 5.11.)

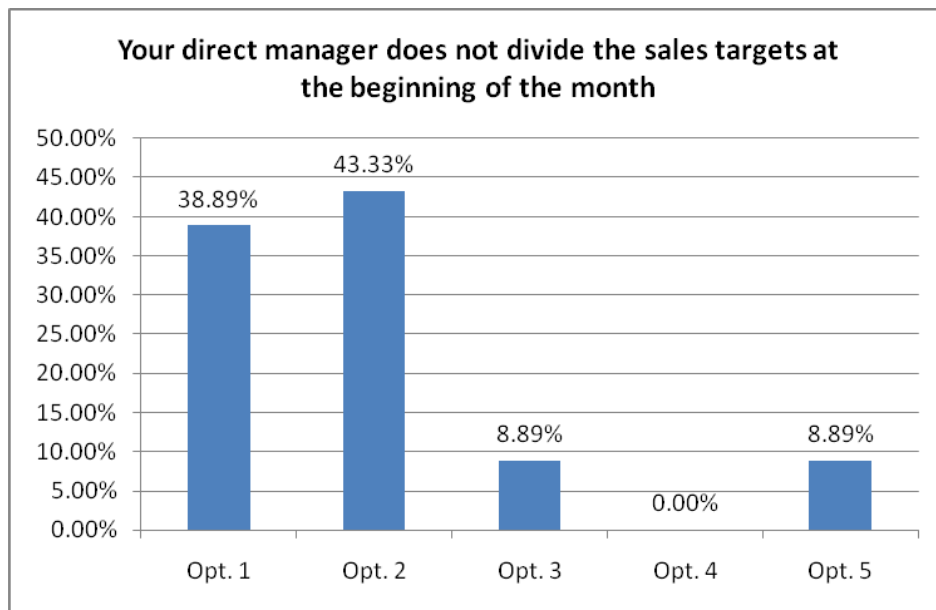


Figure 5.11 Result of Statement 6

Statement 7: Your direct manager focused more on selling skills rather than recruiting skills.

Almost a half of the respondents (46.67%) totally disagree and another 21.11% somewhat disagree with the statement, while only a small number of the respondents (13.33%) totally agree with it. This means that most managers have effectively encouraged their subordinates to sell the products and recruit new agents at the same time, which will bring more positive work outcomes to themselves and to the company. (See Figure 5.12.)

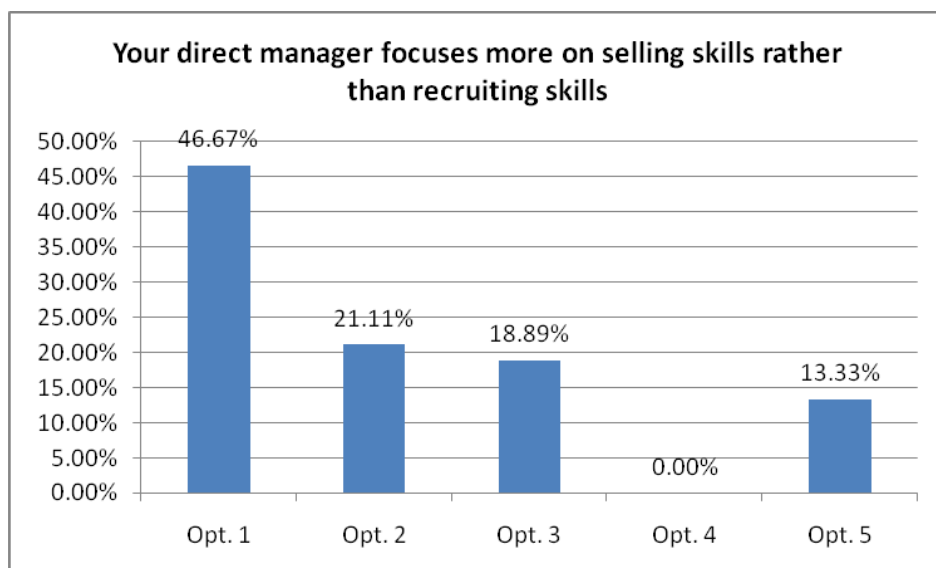


Figure 5.12 Result of Statement 7

Statement 8: Your direct manager solves problems according to the importance of each problem, not based on time order.

This statement is not to evaluate the first-line managers to be either good or bad as each manager has their own way of working and own style of managing. However, in some cases, if the manager solves problems in time order, they are believed to be more effective at time management. For this statement, 43.33% of the respondents disagree and 32.22% of the respondents agree with it while 24.44% have no idea. This means that there are more managers who solve problems in order of time than those who manage according to the importance of each problem. (See Figure 5.13.)

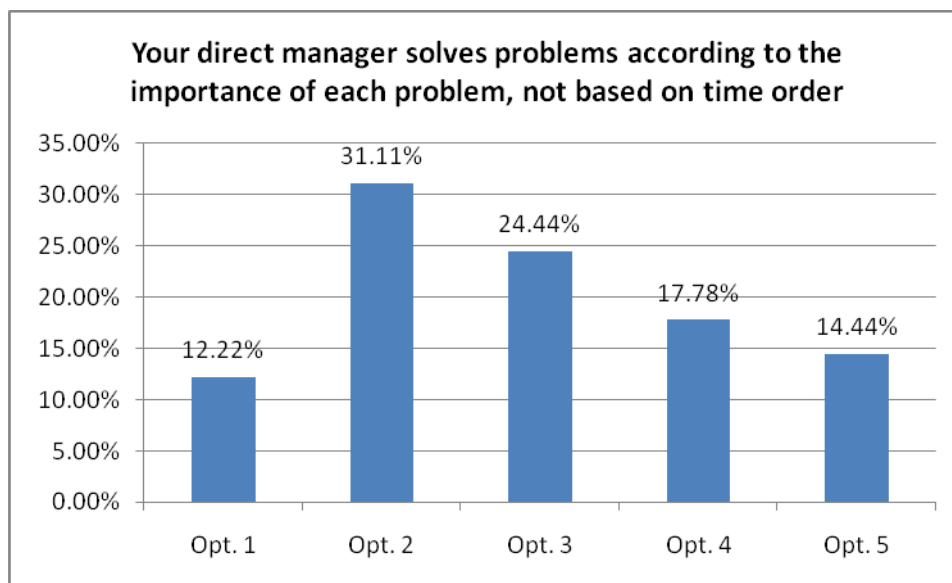


Figure 5.13 Result of Statement 8

Statement 9: Your direct manager does not solve all the problems that have arisen.

It is amazing that no single respondent totally agree with this statement, although there is 10.00% of the respondents who do agree to some extent. More than 75% of the respondents believe that their managers have been able to solve all the problems that have arisen, which can make a very positive impact on the company. (See Figure 5.14.)

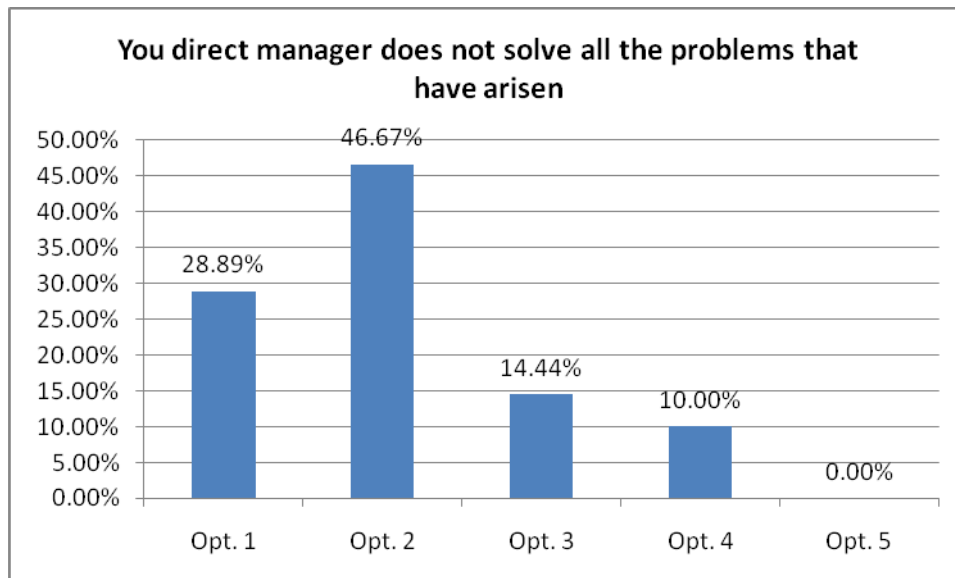


Figure 5.14 Result of Statement 9

5.2.4 Directing skills

Statement 10: Your direct manager starts addressing the problem with you when your performance is not satisfactory.

There are 41.11% of the respondents who totally agree with the statement while more than a half of them (45.55%) disagree with it, including both those who totally disagree (24.44%) and those who somewhat disagree (21.11%). This means that the directing skills of the first-line managers in the department somehow vary as some care more and are willing to know what problems or difficulties their subordinates are facing when their work performance is not satisfactory, while some may either ignore the problem or stay silent and wait until the next period for the work performance to improve. (See Figure 5.15.)

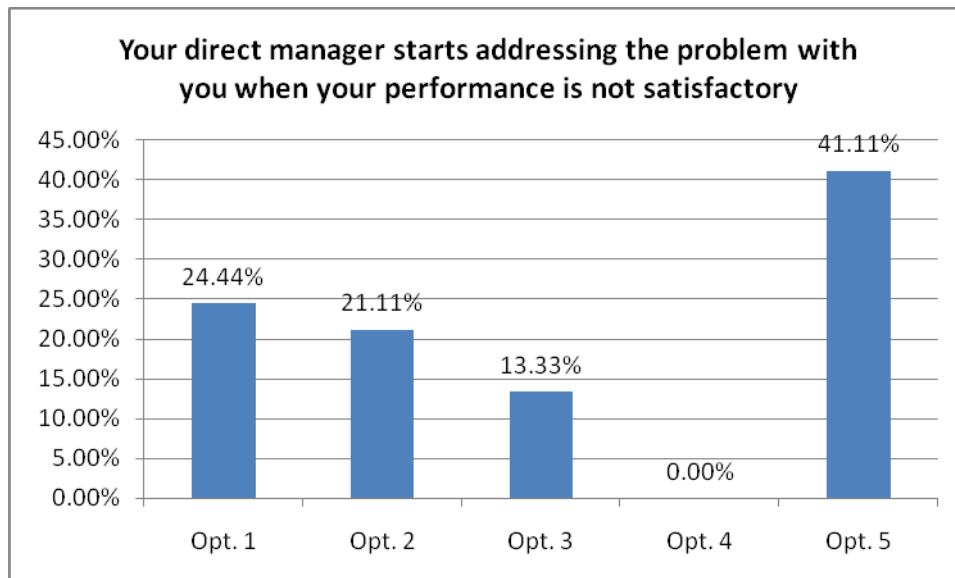


Figure 5.15 Result of Statement 10

Statement 11: Your direct manager only starts addressing the problem with another agent that you know when their performance is very dissatisfactory.

It is predictable that many respondents will refuse to either agree or disagree with this statement since they may not know enough about their colleagues. 28.89% of the respondents say that they have no idea while 32.22% of respondents totally disagree with the statement. Surprisingly, the remaining 38.89% of the respondents agree with it either totally (26.67%) or partially (12.22%). Again, this means that the directing skills of the first-line managers do vary a great deal. (See Figure 5.16.)

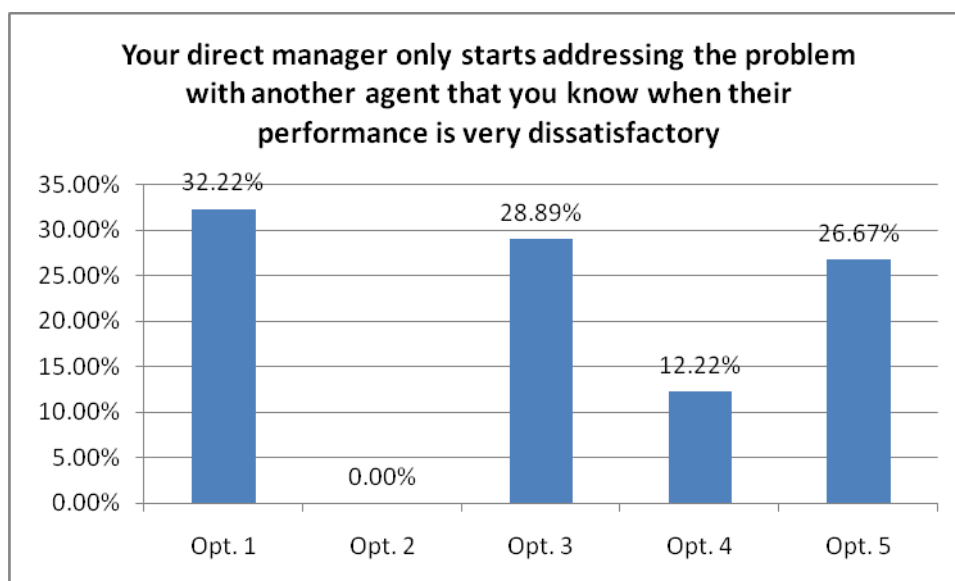


Figure 5.16 Result of Statement 11

Statement 12: Your direct manager constantly advises you to simultaneously increase sales and recruit new agents.

Amazingly, 100% of the respondents totally agree with this statement, meaning that all managers have successfully conveyed the company's message to their subordinates, which is "sell and recruit all the time". (See Figure 5.17.)

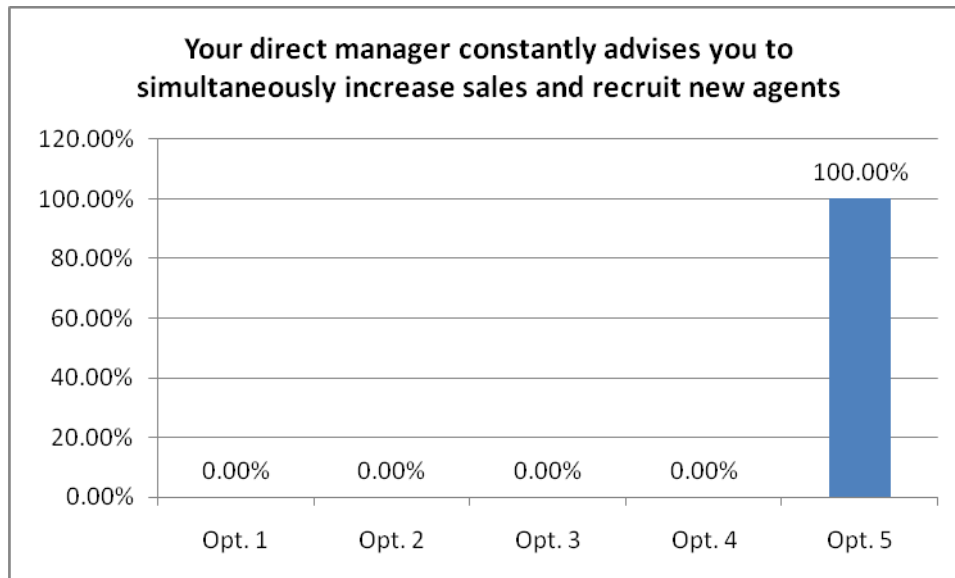


Figure 5.17 Result of Statement 12

Statement 13: All new first-line managers do not know how to conduct weekly meetings.

37.78% of the respondents somewhat agree and 14.44% of the respondents totally agree with the statement. However, there are a number of respondents who disagree with the statement, with the total percentage of 42.22%. Since the first-line manager's background and their basic knowledge of management skills vary a great deal, some of them possess some necessary skills when they are first promoted to managerial positions while some of them have difficulties in the beginning. However, if the company provides sufficient training to them, their skills will be improved. (See Figure 5.18.)

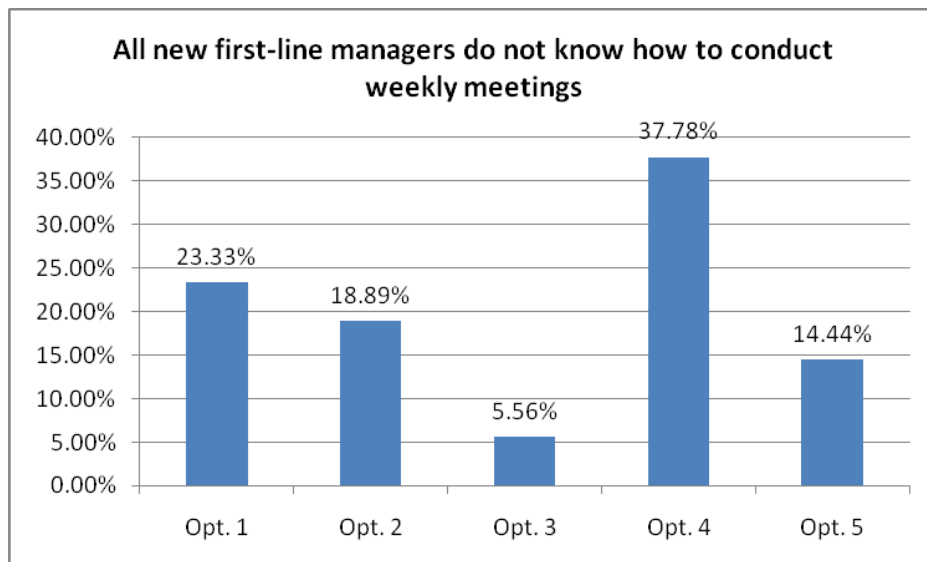


Figure 5.18 Result of Statement 13

5.2.5 Communication skills

Statement 14: Your direct manager always seems friendly (through non-verbal communication).

A hundred percent of the respondents agree with the statement, either totally (75.56%) or partially (24.44%). This is predictable in such a company selling the above-mentioned product. The working environment is required to be friendly and all managers are expected to treat their subordinates equally and kindly. (See Figure 5.19.)

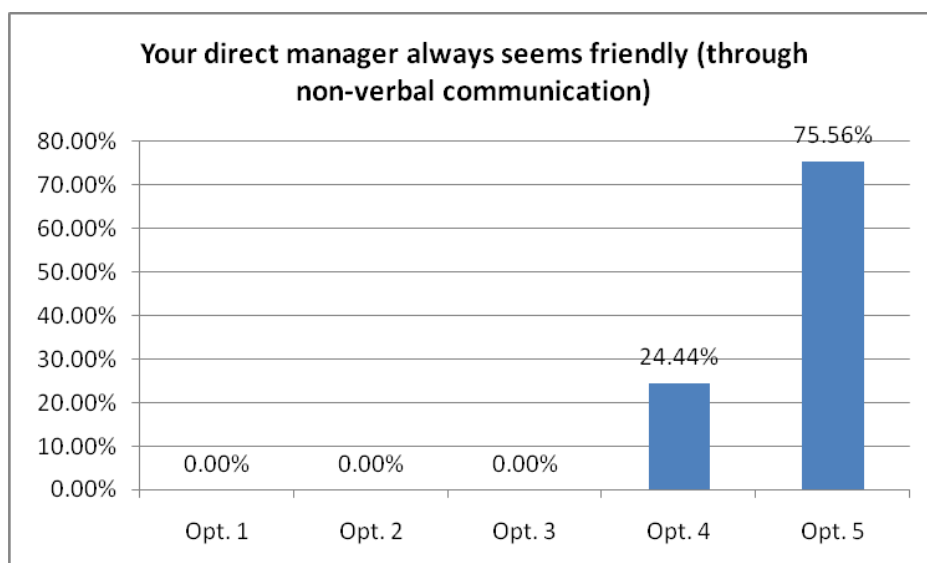


Figure 5.19 Result of Statement 14

Statement 15: Your direct manager gets along with you quite well (through verbal communication).

A hundred percent of the respondents agree with the statement, either totally (75.56%) or partially (24.44%). All managers are expected to behave professionally, firstly by their way of talking with the subordinates. This result is a proof that the first-line managers are satisfying the company's expectations. (See Figure 5.20.)

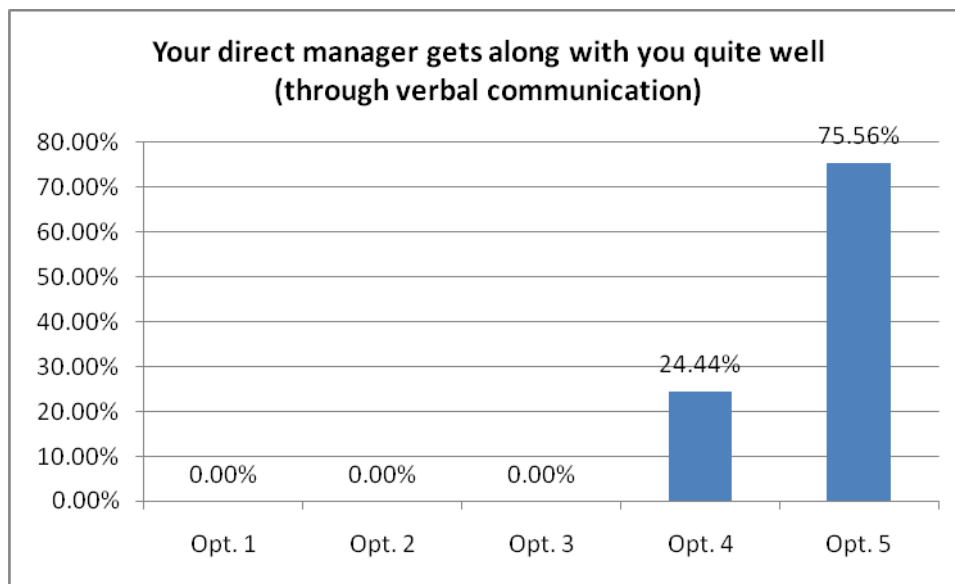


Figure 5.20 Result of Statement 15

Statement 16: You do not feel comfortable to talk to your direct manager about his/her problems or weaknesses.

More than a half of the respondents (51.11%) agree either totally (20.00%) or partially (31.11%) with the statement, while almost a half of the respondents (48.89%) disagree either totally (23.33%) or partially (25.56%) with it. This statement is related to the first-line managers' communication skills; however, it also depends on the subordinates' personalities and willingness as some of them desire to give constructive comments to make the team stronger and be led by a good leader while some others feel that they are in no position to judge. (See Figure 5.21.)

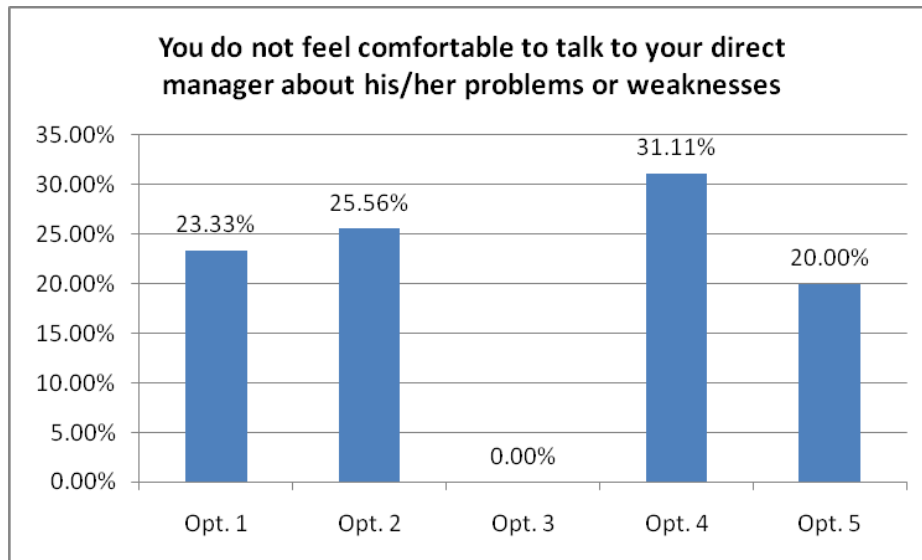


Figure 5.21 Result of Statement 16

Statement 17: You have no intentions to make suggestions in order to help your direct manager solve his/her problems.

This statement somewhat supports the one above as it is related to how the first-line managers encourage their subordinates to give constructive comments and suggestions in order to make the team stronger and more united. Almost a half of the respondents (43.33%) totally disagree with the statement, meaning that most of them are willing to make suggestions to help their direct manager solve his or her own problems. 24.44% of the respondents somewhat disagree and another 18.89% somewhat agree, which also depends on the subordinates' personalities and willingness. (See Figure 5.22.)

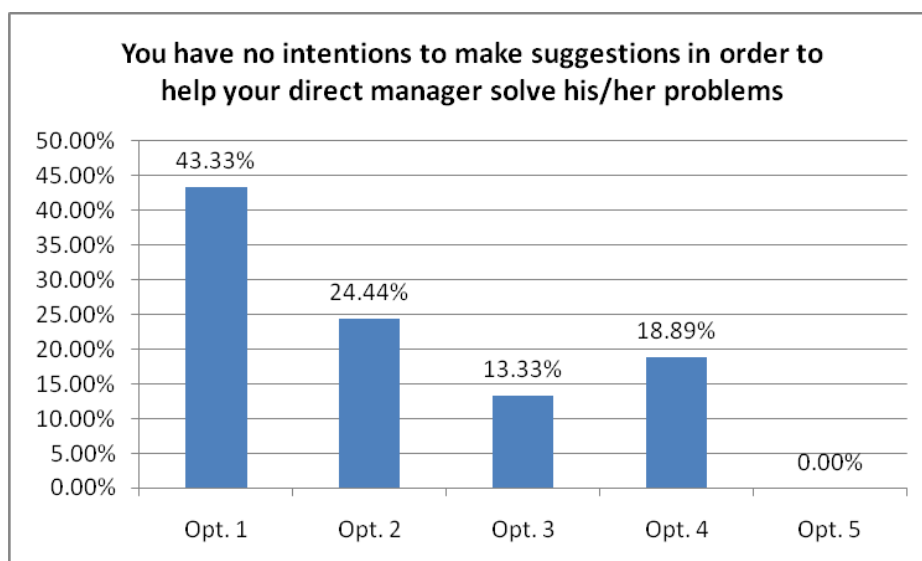


Figure 5.22 Result of Statement 17

Statement 18: During meetings, your direct manager does not seem to have prepared his/her speeches carefully in advance.

32.22% of the respondents somewhat disagree with the statement, believing that their managers do prepare their speeches carefully before meetings. However, 22.22% of the respondents believe otherwise while another 26.67% strongly disagree with the statement. The remaining 18.89% of the respondents have no idea or refuse to give their opinions. This result means that the first-line managers' communication skills, and also planning skills still vary a great deal. (See Figure 5.23.)

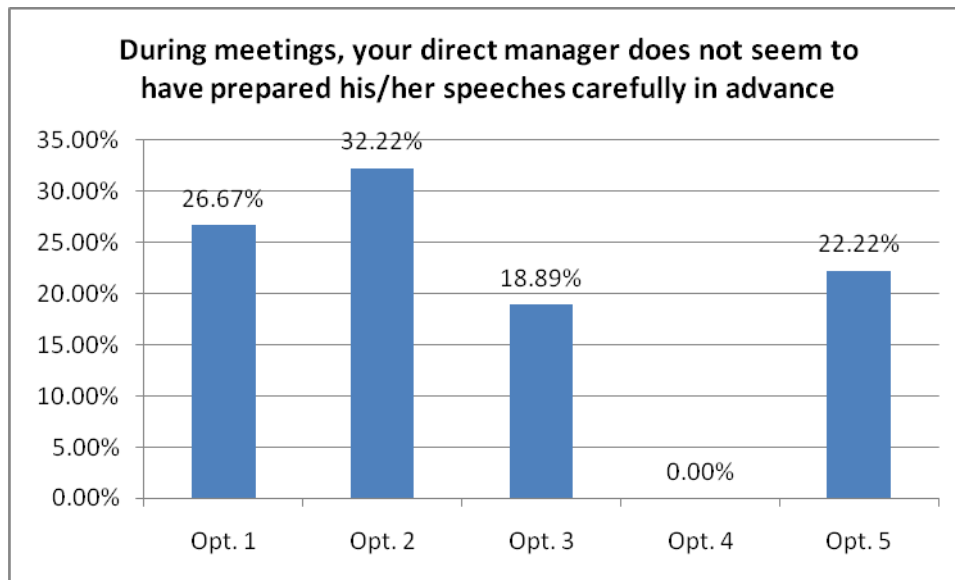


Figure 5.23 Result of Statement 18

Statement 19: Your direct manager's speeches do not make you feel more knowledgeable.

More than a half of the respondents (63.33%) disagree either totally (32.22%) or partially (31.11%) with the statement, which means that in most cases, the first-line managers have successfully conveyed new knowledge to their subordinates and made them feel more knowledgeable, either about the products or management skills. There is still a number of respondents (26.67%) who somewhat agree with the statement. (See Figure 5.24.)

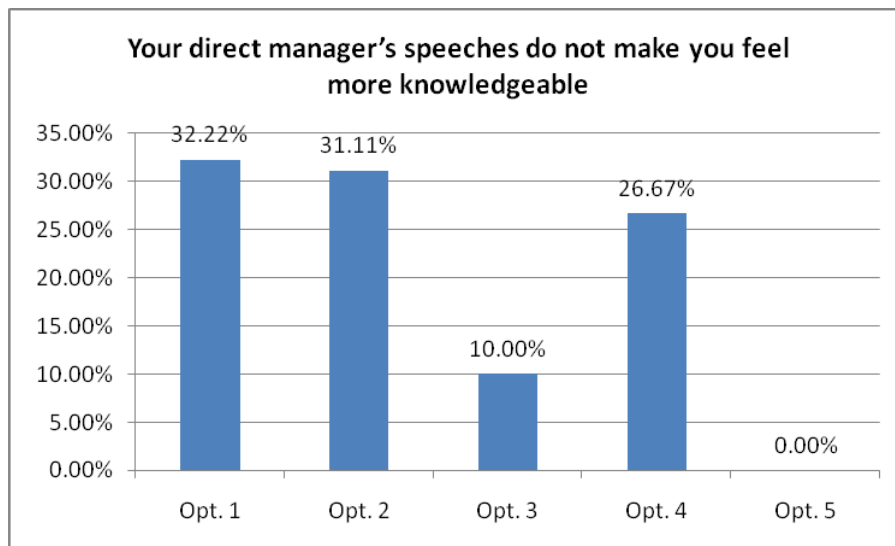


Figure 5.24 Result of Statement 19

Statement 20: Your direct manager's speeches do not make you feel more confident.

The total number of respondents who do agree with the statement, either totally or partially, almost equals to the number of those who do not. The biggest part of respondents (30.00%) somewhat agree with it, meaning that in most cases, the first-line managers have not been so successful in making their subordinates feel more confident. This may be true in some cases; according to my results in observing several meetings and the employees' attitudes, it seems that some or most first-line managers have high expectations and make everything sound so fancy but fail to take into consideration the real situations or real difficulties of the subordinates. (See Figure 5.25.)

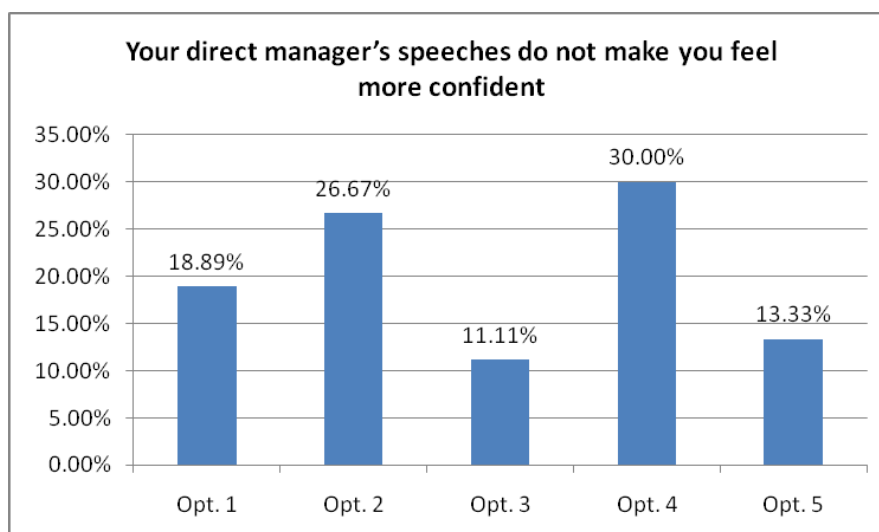


Figure 5.25 Result of Statement 20

Statement 21: Your direct manager's speeches do not help you solve your problems completely.

Making the subordinates feel more knowledgeable is one thing, while making them feel more confident is another. At least in Statement 19, it shows that most first-line managers have succeeded in doing the former. The result of this statement again confirms that of Statement 19. Most respondents (42.22%) somewhat disagree with the statement, which means that most first-line managers' speeches do help the subordinates solve their problems completely. (See Figure 5.26.)

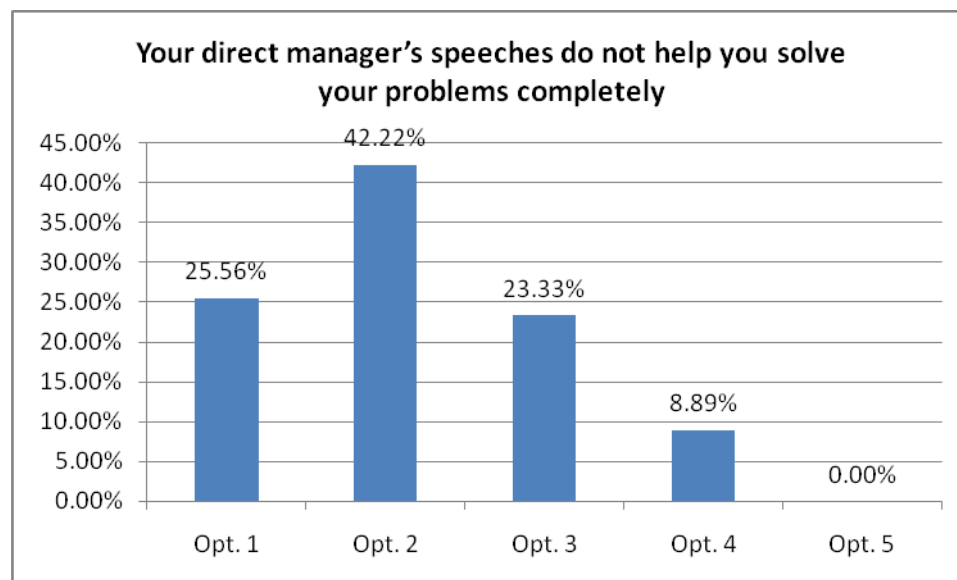


Figure 5.26 Result of Statement 21

Statement 22: Your direct manager clearly informs you about all the new announcements of the company.

More than a half of the respondents (71.11%) totally agree with the statement that their direct managers clearly inform them about all the new announcements of the company. Another 20.00% somewhat agree with it while the remaining 8.89% of the respondents have no idea. The overall result is positive and means that most first-line managers have satisfied the company's expectations. (See Figure 5.27.)

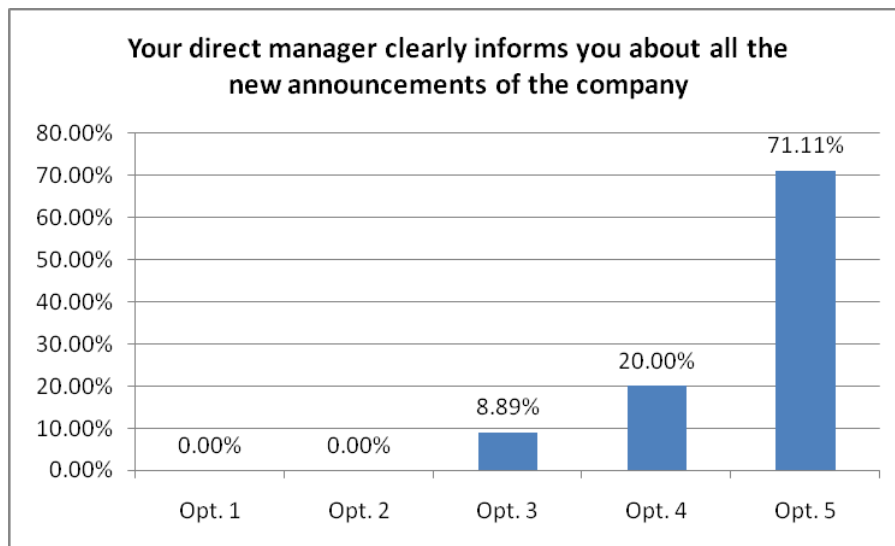


Figure 5.27 Result of Statement 22

5.2.6 Motivation skills

Statement 23: When you talk to your direct manager about your problems and difficulties at work, he/she helps enthusiastically.

More than a half of the respondents (57.78%) totally agree with the statement that their direct managers do help them enthusiastically with their problems and difficulties at work. Some respondents (32.22%) somewhat agree while a small number of the respondents (10.00%) somewhat disagree with it. The overall result is positive and means that most first-line managers have satisfied the company's expectations. (See Figure 5.28.)

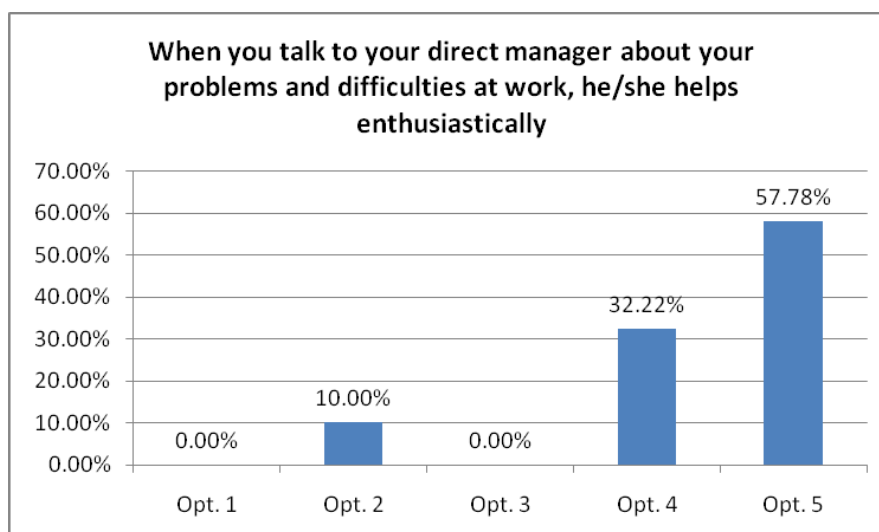


Figure 5.28 Result of Statement 23

Statement 24: Your direct manager never asks you whether or not you have any current problems or difficulties.

Talking to or asking subordinates about their current problems or difficulties is a great way first-line managers can motivate their employees. For this statement, the number of respondents who somewhat agree with it almost equals to the number of those who totally do not. The total percentage of the respondents who disagree with it, either totally (32.22%) or partially (13.33%), is almost a half (45.55%), meaning that most first-line managers do ask their subordinates whether or not they have any current problems or difficulties. (See Figure 5.29.)

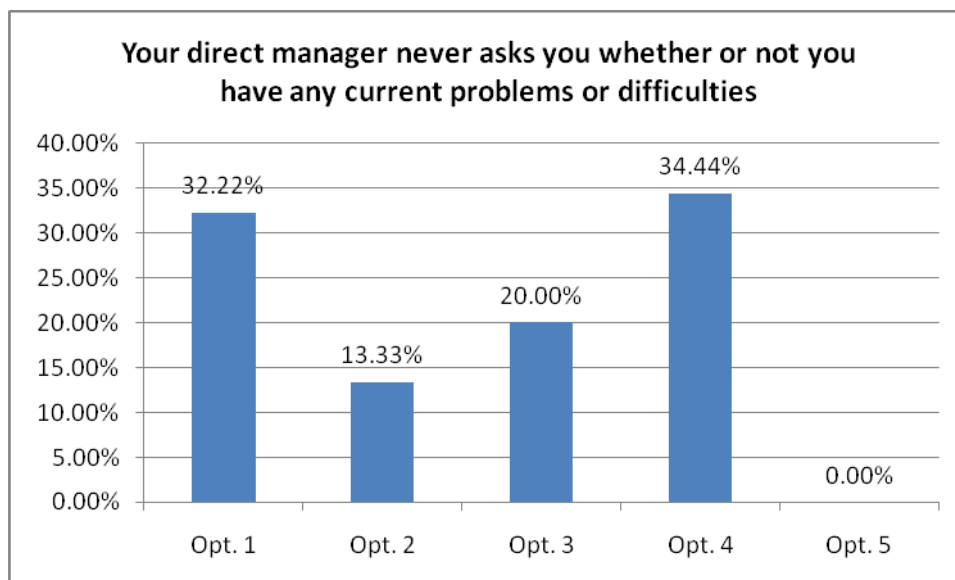


Figure 5.29 Result of Statement 24

Statement 25: Your direct manager advises you to make your future career as a professional manager.

All of the respondents (100.00%) either totally (81.11%) or partially (18.89%) agree with the statement. The bigger part of them (81.11%) totally agrees that their direct managers do orient them to make their future career as a professional manager. The overall result is extremely positive and means that most first-line managers have satisfied the company's expectation. (See Figure 5.30.)



Figure 5.30 Result of Statement 25

Statement 26: Your direct manager constantly finds ways to help you with your problems or difficulties.

Almost a half of the respondents (45.56%) totally agree while 31.11% of the respondents somewhat agree with the statement. This means that most first-line managers constantly find ways to help their subordinates with their problems or difficulties. Only a very small number of the respondents (13.33%) somewhat disagree with the statement. The overall result is positive and means that most first-line managers have satisfied the company's expectations. (See Figure 5.31.)

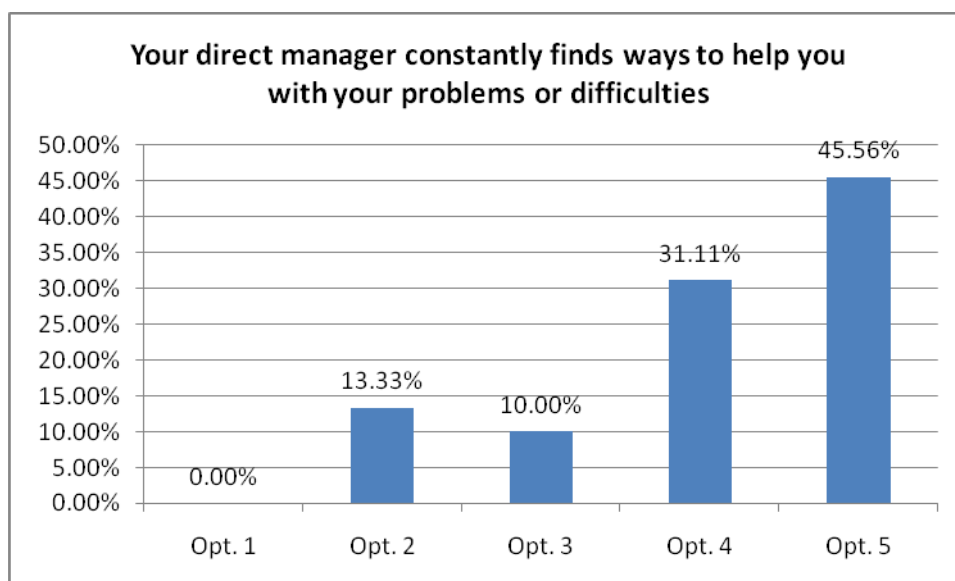


Figure 5.31 Result of Statement 26

Statement 27: Your direct manager constantly finds ways to help other members of your team with their problems or difficulties.

Almost all the respondents (91.11%) agree with the statement, either totally (60.00%) or partially (31.11%), believing that their direct managers constantly find ways to help the other members in their teams to solve their problems or difficulties. The overall result is very positive and means that most first-line managers have satisfied the company's expectations. (See Figure 5.32.)

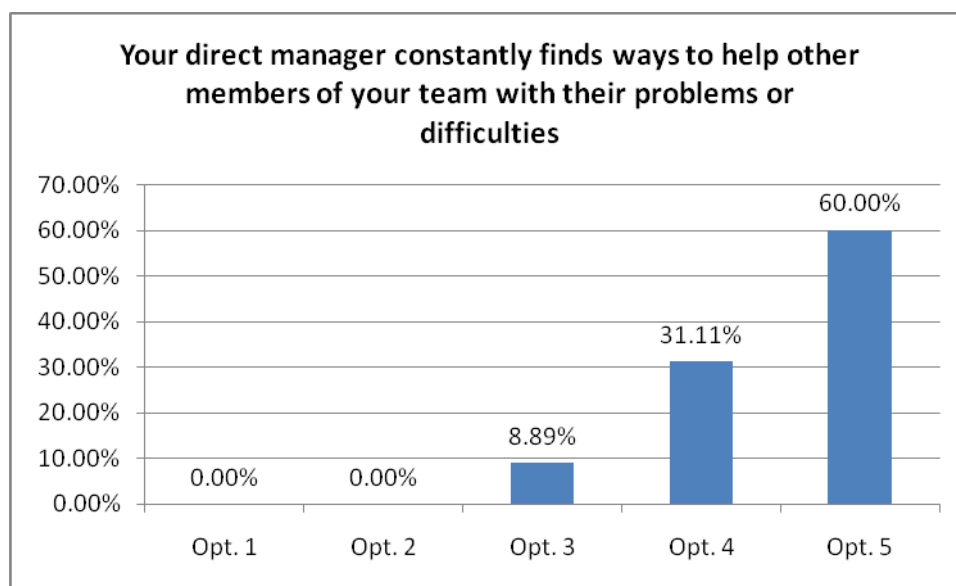


Figure 5.32 Result of Statement 27

Statement 28: You feel comfortable to tell your direct manager about your problems or difficulties.

All of the respondents (100.00%) either totally (60.00%) or partially (40.00%) agree with the statement, which means that in almost all cases, they feel comfortable to tell their direct manager about their own problems or difficulties. It means that all first-line managers have succeeded in encouraging their subordinates to open up about their real situations; it is also related to monitoring skills as the managers want to know what is going on with their employees. The overall result is very positive and means that most first-line managers have satisfied the company's expectations. (See Figure 5.33.)

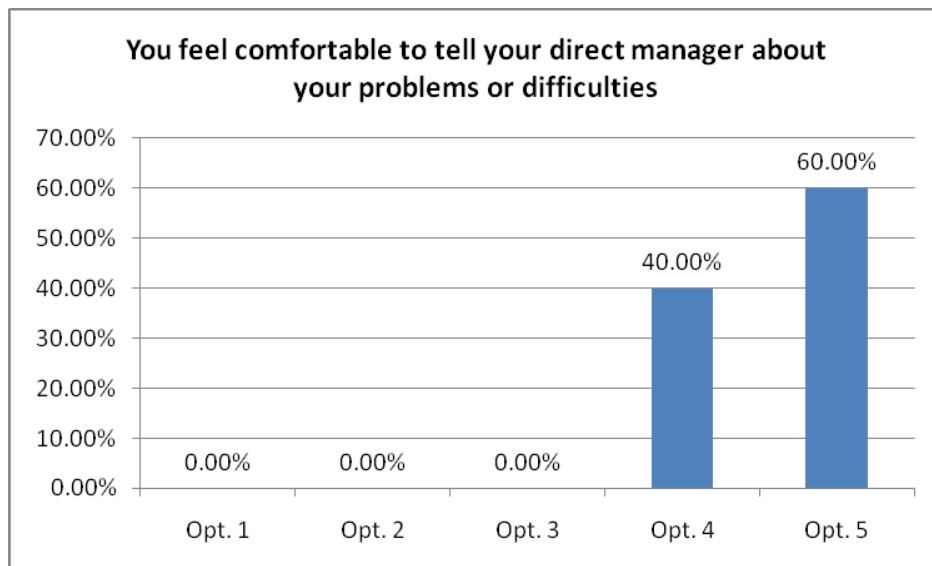


Figure 5.33 Result of Statement 28

Statement 29: You feel comfortable to contact your direct manager by phone.

More than a half of the respondents (67.78%) totally agree with the statement while the remaining 32.22% of the respondents somewhat do. Together with all the above results of the statements concerning first-line managers' motivation skills, this result shows that most first-line managers in the studied department have effectively motivated the subordinates, firstly by making them feel comfortable to talk and then by listening to them about their problems. The overall result is very positive and means that most first-line managers have satisfied the company's expectations. (See Figure 5.34.)

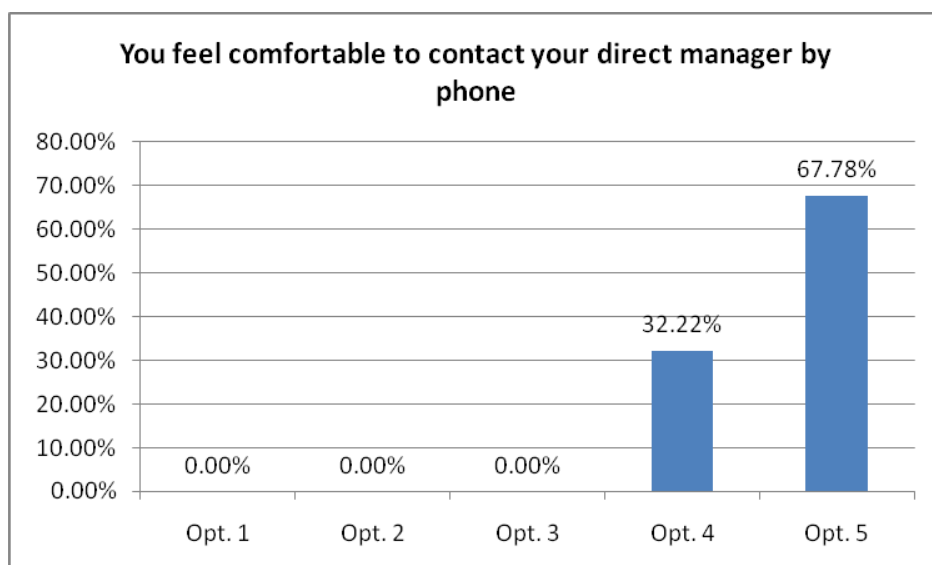


Figure 5.34 Result of Statement 29

Statement 30: You feel comfortable to discuss work matters with your direct manager outside the office.

More than a half of the respondents (58.89%) totally agree and almost a half of the respondents (41.11%) somewhat agree with the statement. This means that in all cases, the subordinates feel quite comfortable to discuss work matters with their direct managers outside the office. The overall result is very positive and means that most first-line managers have satisfied the company's expectations. (See Figure 5.35.)

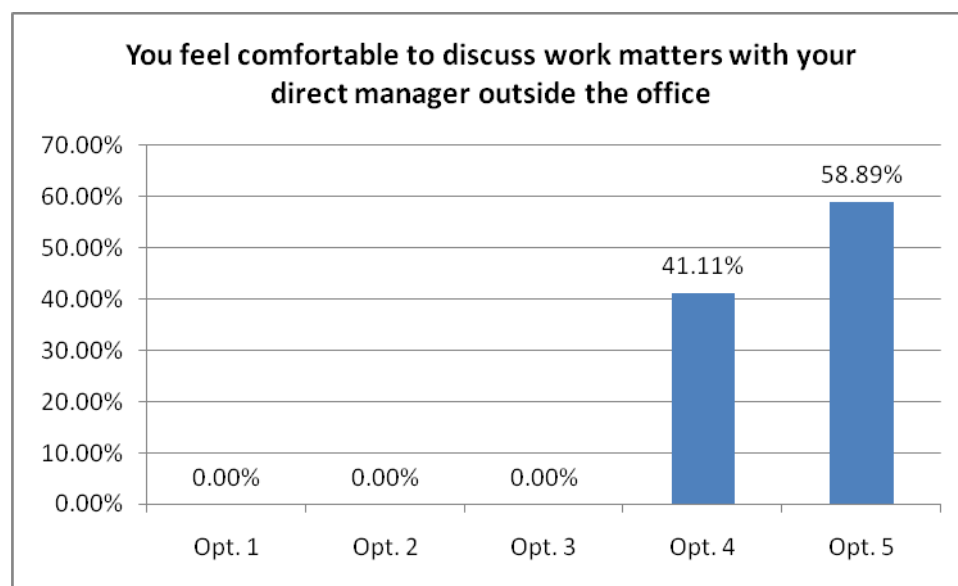


Figure 5.35 Result of Statement 30

Statement 31: Your direct manager praises and rewards you if you have good performance.

Rewarding employees with good performance is also a great way that managers can motivate them and encourage other employees to improve their performance as well. For this statement, the result is very positive while 100% of the respondents, either totally (58.89%) or partially (41.11%), agree that their direct managers do praise and reward them when they bring good results to the team. This means that most first-line managers have satisfied the company's expectations. (See Figure 5.36.)

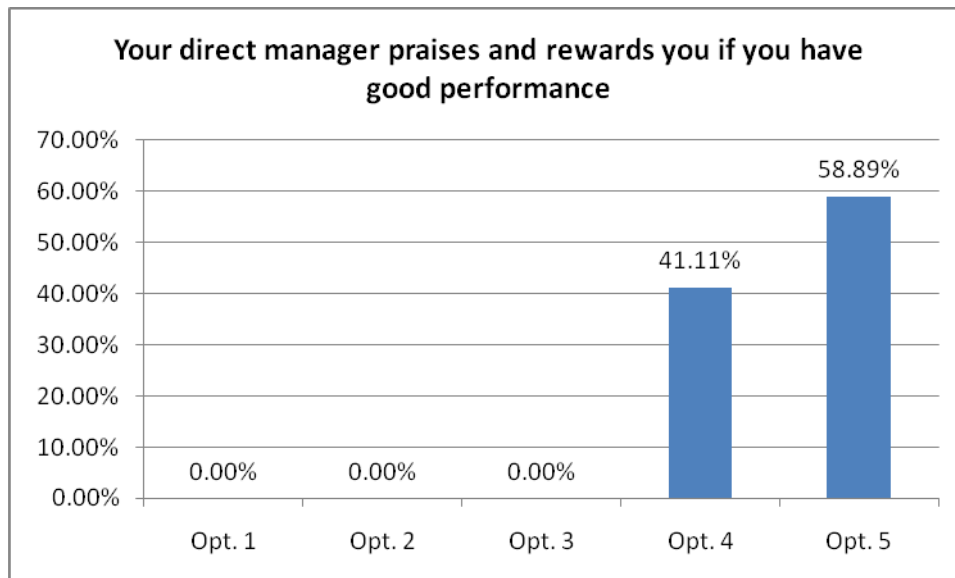


Figure 5.36 Result of Statement 31

Statement 32: Your direct manager praises and rewards your team if your team has good performance.

More than a half of the respondents (65.56%) strongly believe that their direct managers also praise and reward the whole team if the team has good performance. Another 26.67% somewhat agree with the statement while the remaining 7.78% of the respondents have no idea. The overall result is positive and means that most first-line managers have succeeded in motivating their subordinates. (See Figure 5.37.)

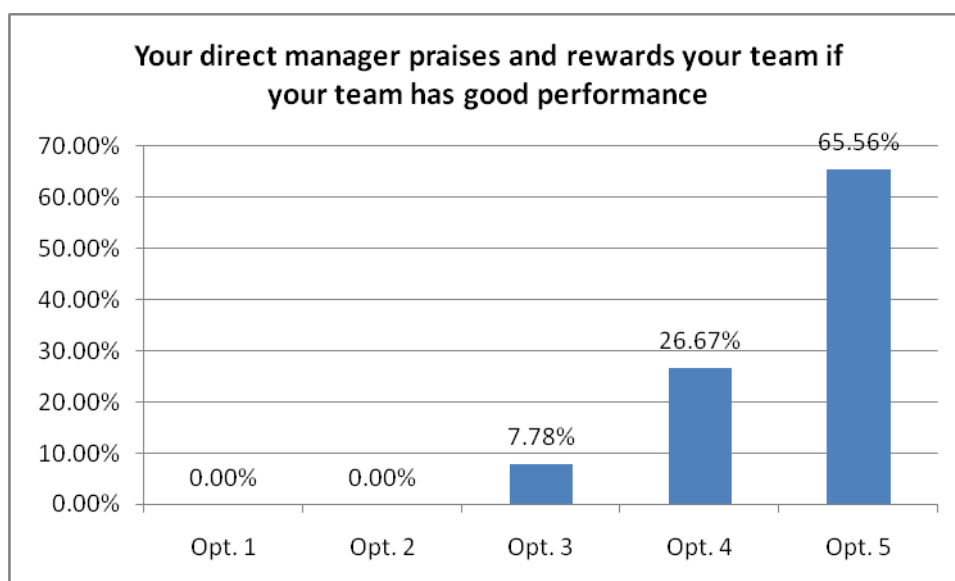


Figure 5.37 Result of Statement 32

Statement 33: You feel proud of working for the company.

A very high percentage of the respondents (81.11%) totally agree with the statement. No respondent disagrees with it either totally or partially. The result is very positive and it means that in almost all cases, the first-line managers have effectively made their subordinates feel proud of working for the company and being a part of the team. (See Figure 5.38.)

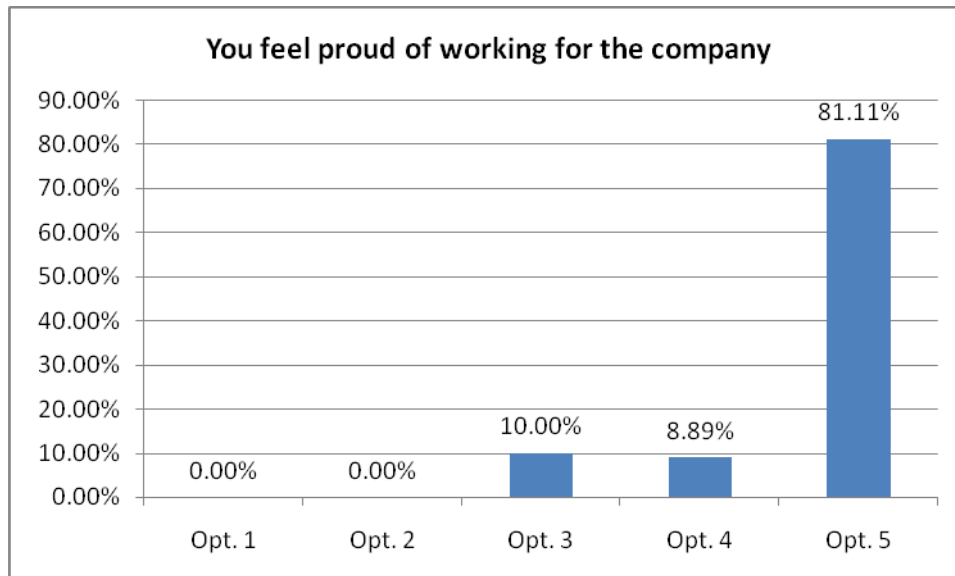


Figure 5.38 Result of Statement 33

Statement 34: You intend to keep working for the company.

Almost all of the respondents (92.22%) agree with the statement, meaning that almost all of them have the intention of working for the company for quite a long time in future. Only 7.78% of the respondents seem to have not made their decision yet. Still, the overall result is very positive and means that most first-line managers have satisfied the company's expectations. (See Figure 5.39.)

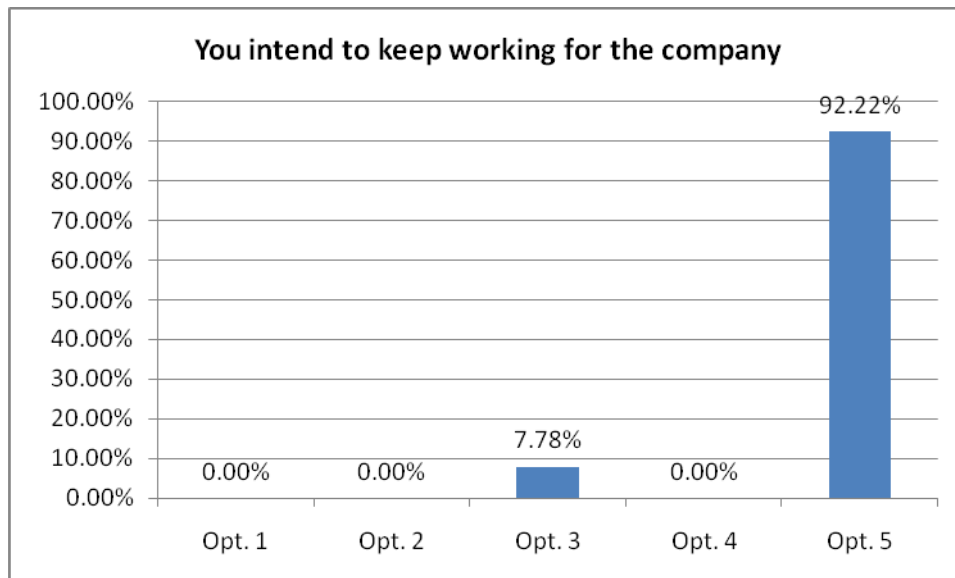


Figure 5.39 Result of Statement 34

Statement 35: You are willing to learn new things.

It comes as no surprise that 100% of the respondents agree that they all have a learning spirit and are willing to learn new things. This is extremely positive and can make quite an impact on the whole working environment. This is the basic condition that the company can expect to succeed when providing the employees with training programs to increase their skills, either in the technical field or the management field. (See Figure 5.40.)

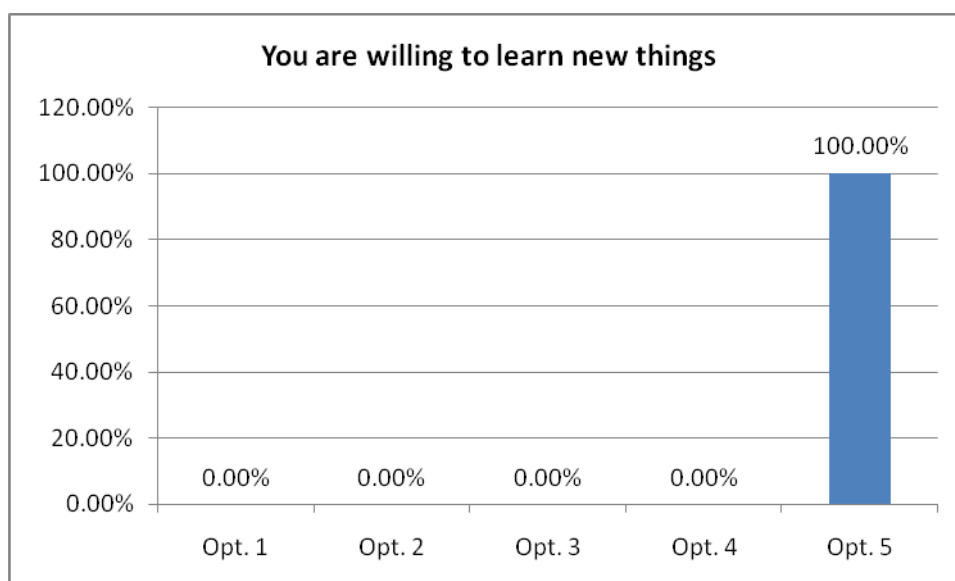


Figure 5.40 Result of Statement 35

Statement 36: Your direct manager seems to be willing to learn new things.

Most of the respondents (80.00%) may also have noticed their direct managers' high learning spirit and how the managers are willing to learn new things. 11.11% of the respondents somewhat agree with the statement and the remaining 8.89% have no idea. The overall result is already very positive and can make it easier for the company to provide the first-line managers with training in management skills. (See Figure 5.41.)

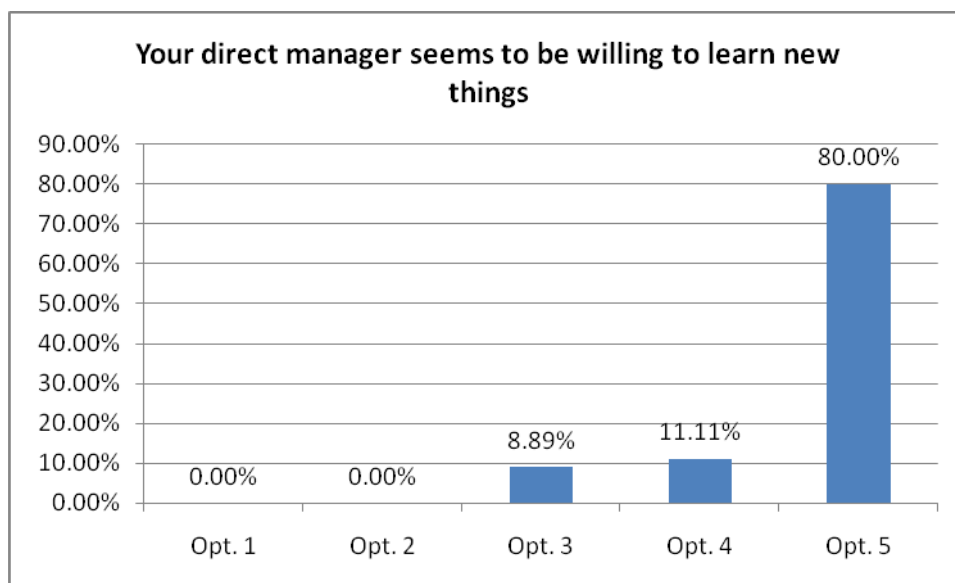


Figure 5.41 Result of Statement 36

5.2.7 Training and coaching skills

Statement 37: Your direct manager gives you clear solutions and advice to solve your problems.

All of the respondents (100.00%) either totally (42.22%) or partially (57.78%) agree with the statement that their direct managers give them clear solutions and advice to help them solve their problems. This statement is closely related to monitoring skills or coaching skills of the first-line managers as they do not only try to find out their subordinates' problems but also help the subordinates solve those problems. The overall result is very positive and means that most first-line managers have satisfied the company's expectations. (See Figure 5.42.)

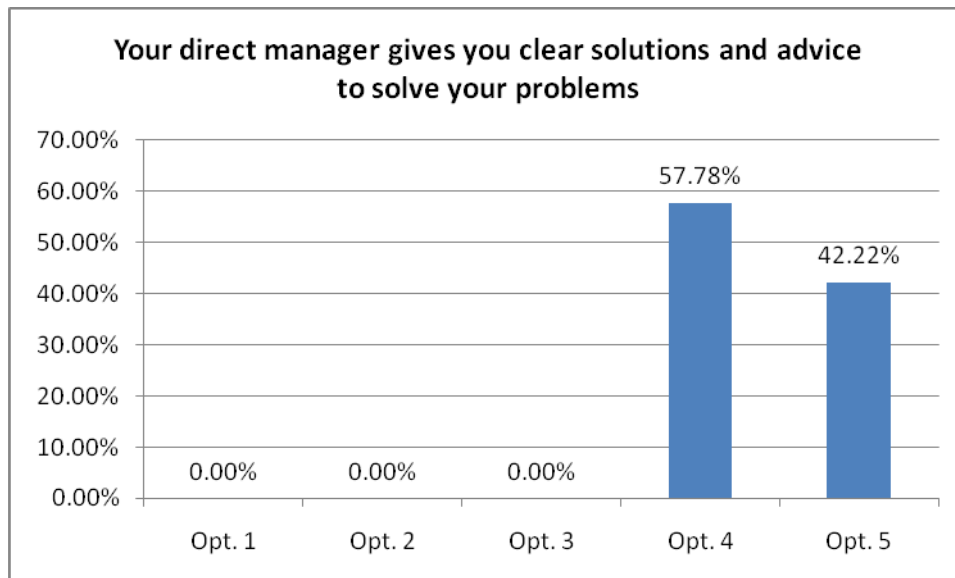


Figure 5.42 Result of Statement 37

Statement 38: Your direct manager has, at least once, gone together with you to a consultation with your customer.

There are two different streams of opinions about this statement. Most of the respondents (60.00%) totally agree and a small number of those (6.67%) somewhat agree with it, while the remaining 33.33% of the respondents totally do not. This depends on the methods which a first-line manager is willing to use to train his or her subordinates. Some managers desire to train their subordinates on the job by going together with them to show them what a consultation should be like or how to close a deal with a customer, while some prefer to share their experiences beforehand and let the subordinates deal with the job independently. However, the overall result is positive and means that most first-line managers are willing to help their subordinates individually. (See Figure 5.43.)

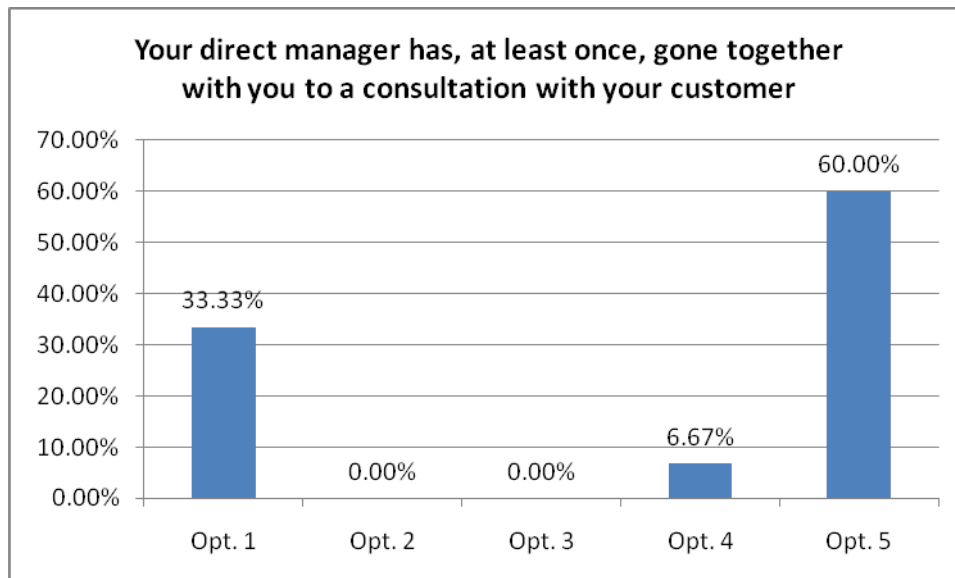


Figure 5.43 Result of Statement 38

Statement 39: Your direct manager shares with you his/her personal experiences in recruiting new agents.

More than a half of the respondents (67.78%) agree with the statement, either totally (42.22%) or partially (25.56%), meaning that most first-line managers do share their personal experiences in recruiting new agents with their subordinates. However, there is an existing number of those respondents (23.33%) who totally disagree with the statement. Nevertheless, the overall result is positive and means that most first-line managers have done their job quite well. (See Figure 5.44.)

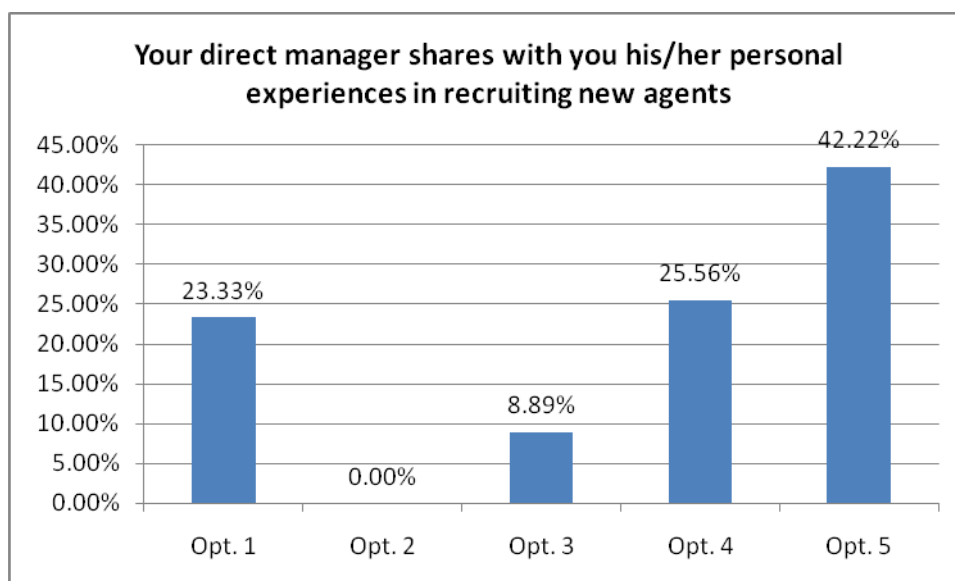


Figure 5.44 Result of Statement 39

Statement 40: Your direct manager does not train you properly on recruiting new agents.

The number of the respondents who somewhat agree with the statement (34.44%) almost equals to the number of those who totally disagree with it (36.67%). While 12.22% of the respondents totally agree that their direct managers do not train them properly on recruiting new agents, another 8.89% somewhat believe otherwise. This is a proof that the first-line managers' skills in training their subordinates still vary a great deal and more proper training should be provided to them. (See Figure 5.45.)

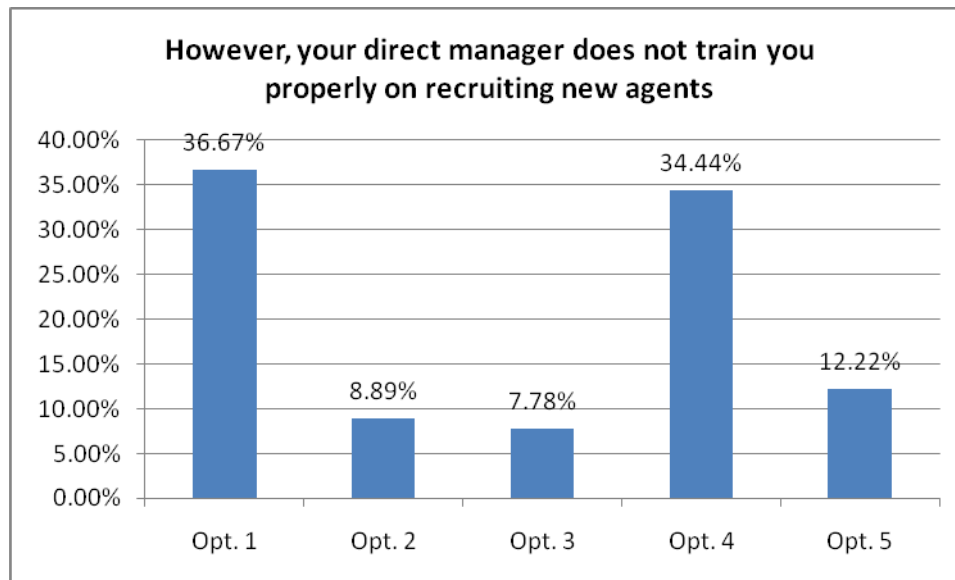


Figure 5.45 Result of Statement 40

Statement 41: Your direct manager does not talk to you individually to see which skills you do not possess sufficiently.

36.67% of the respondents totally disagree and 21.11% somewhat disagree with the statement that their direct managers do not talk to them individually to see which skills they are still lacking. 18.89% of the respondents totally agree and 12.22% of the respondents somewhat agree with the statement. This means that most first-line managers in the studied department do care about and follow their subordinates to know their situations in order to provide them with sufficient training. The overall result in this case is positive and means that most first-line managers have satisfied the company's expectations. (See Figure 5.46.)

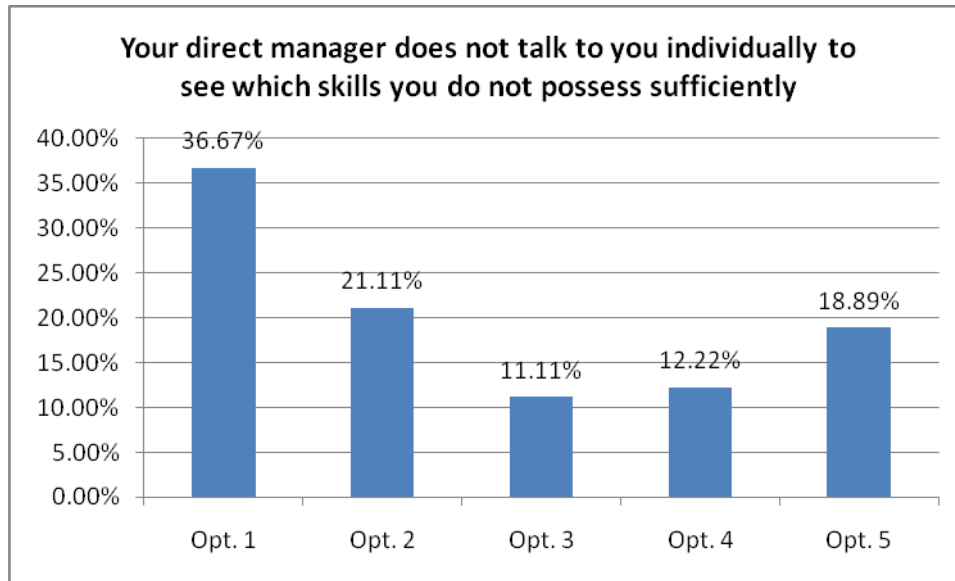


Figure 5.46 Result of Statement 41

5.2.8 Evaluating skills

Statement 42: Your direct manager does not monitor the work performance often.

More than a half of the respondents (62.22%) either totally (32.22%) or partially (30.00%) disagree with the statement, meaning that most first-line managers in the studied department do monitor the work performance quite often. However, there is still an existing number of those respondents (24.44%) who either totally (10.00%) or partially (14.44%) agree with the statement. The meaning of this result is that some managers do monitor the work performance; however, all first-line managers are expected to do the same, which may require more proper training on evaluating skills to be provided. (See Figure 5.47.)

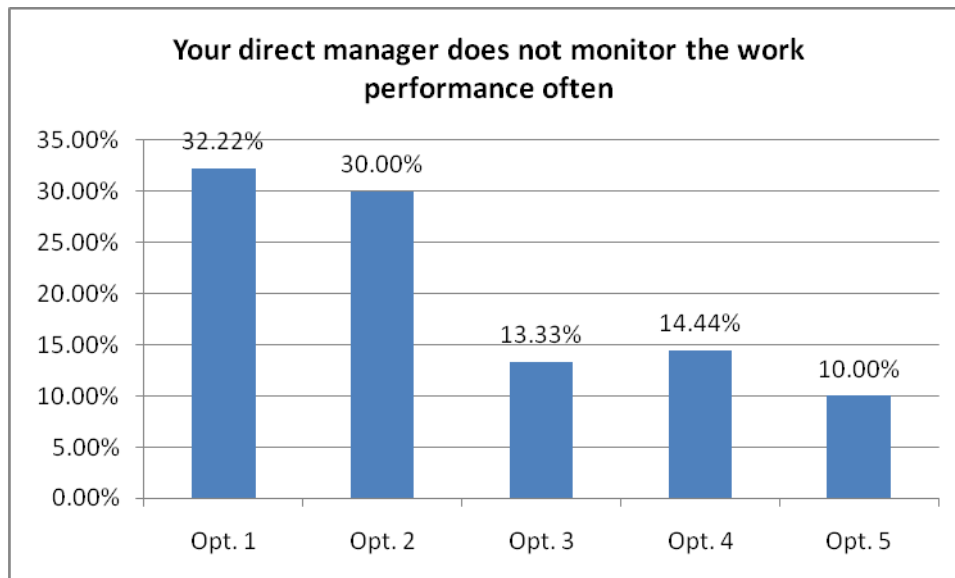


Figure 5.47 Result of Statement 42

Statement 43: Your direct manager monitors the work performance only in the last week of the month.

More than a half of the respondents (57.78%) either totally (37.78%) or partially (20.00%) disagree with the statement that their direct manager only monitors the work performance in the last week of the month. 32.22% of the respondents do agree with the statement, either totally or partially. Again, this means that the monitoring and evaluating skills of the first-line managers vary a great deal as they are not performing work monitoring and evaluation in the same way. (See Figure 5.48.)

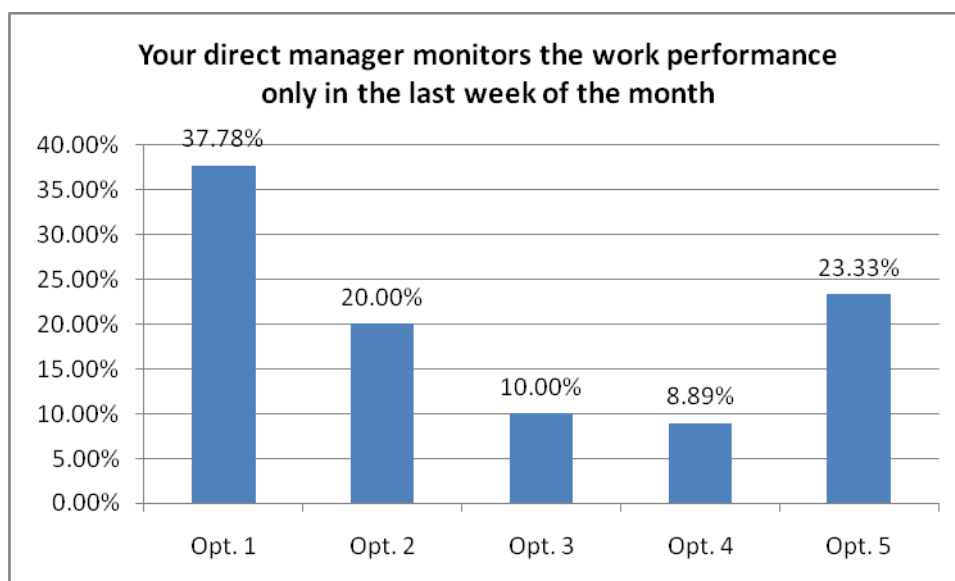


Figure 5.48 Result of Statement 43

Statement 44: Your direct manager does not evaluate the work performance.

None of the respondents (0.00%) totally agree with the statement; however, a minority of them (35.56%) somewhat agree that their direct managers do not evaluate the work performance properly. The majority of the respondents (56.67%) disagree with the statement, either totally (45.56%) or partially (11.11%). This result means that not all the first-line managers are doing their job the way the company is expecting them to. (See Figure 5.49.)

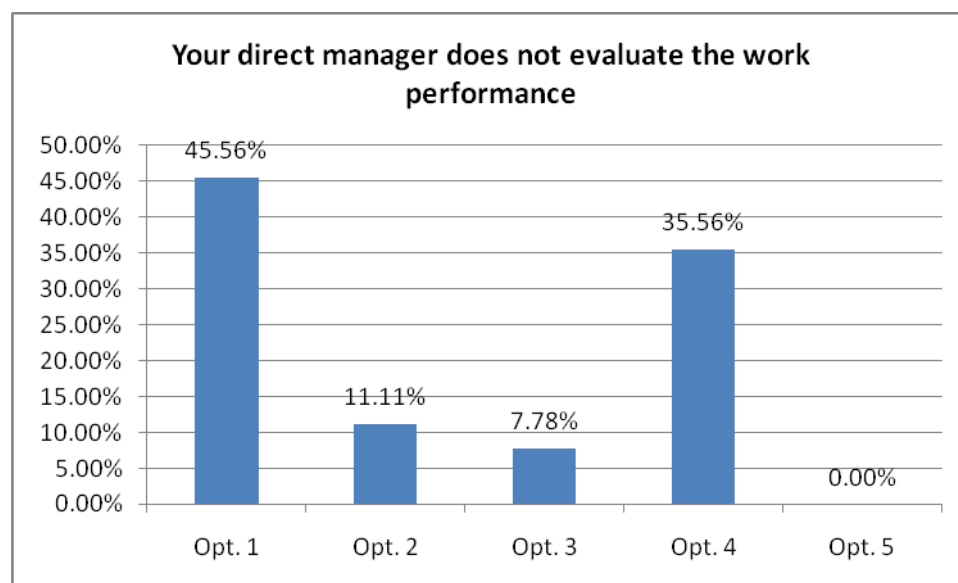


Figure 5.49 Result of Statement 44

Statement 45: Your direct manager does not draw any lessons from the work results.

The opinions about this statement vary a great deal as the relative equality among the number of those respondents who totally disagree (24.44%), those who somewhat disagree (21.11%), those who somewhat agree with the statement (20.00%), and those who have no idea (25.56%). Only 8.89% of the respondents totally believe that their direct managers do not draw any lessons from the work results. This result means that not all the first-line managers are doing their job the way the company is expecting them to. (See Figure 5.50.)

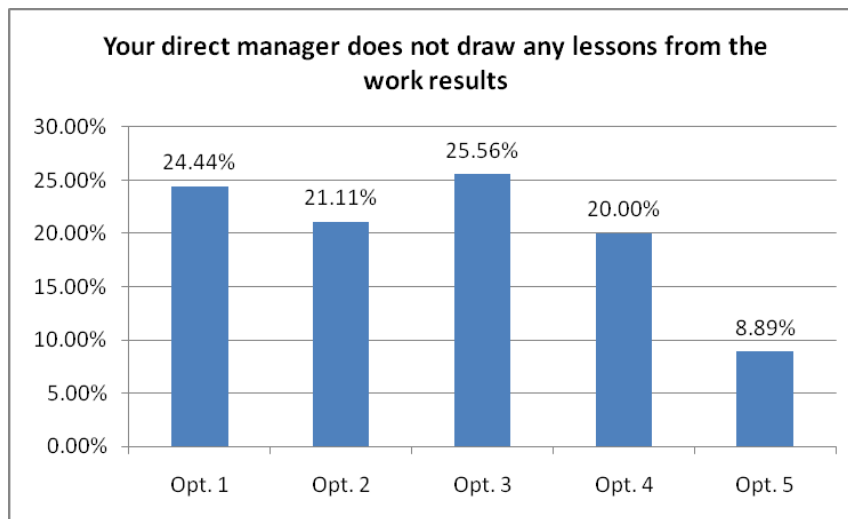


Figure 5.50 Result of Statement 45

5.2.9 Technical knowledge and skills

Statement 46: Your direct manager is able to answer quickly questions concerning product knowledge.

All of the respondents (100.00%) either totally (60.00%) or partially (40.00%) agree with the statement that their direct managers are able to answer quickly questions concerning product knowledge. This may not come as a surprise as the company has provided its employees with a lot of training sessions on required knowledge and skills for the job, including product knowledge and selling skills. The overall result is very positive and means that the company has successfully given the employees such type of training. (See Figure 5.51.)

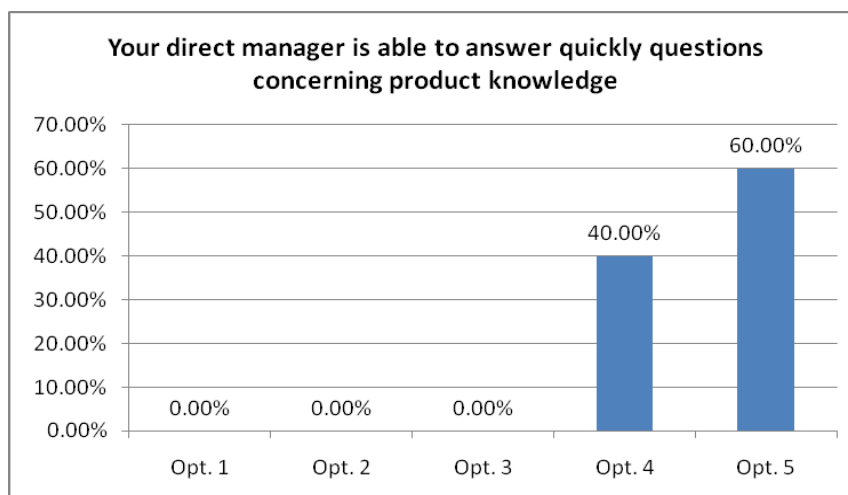


Figure 5.51 Result of Statement 46

Statement 47: Your direct manager has difficulties with information technology.

Almost one third of the respondents (31.11%) have no idea if their direct managers have difficulties with information technology. This is somehow a sensitive statement and requires the respondents some observation in order to give accurate opinions. 11.11% of the respondents totally agree, 26.67% somewhat agree, 13.33% somewhat disagree, and the remaining 17.78% of the respondents totally disagree with the statement. This is understandable as the company's employees have so varied background that not all of them have possessed sufficient knowledge and skills in information technology. Information technology is very important for their jobs as the lack of computer skills may sometimes cause them difficulties at work. (See Figure 5.52.)

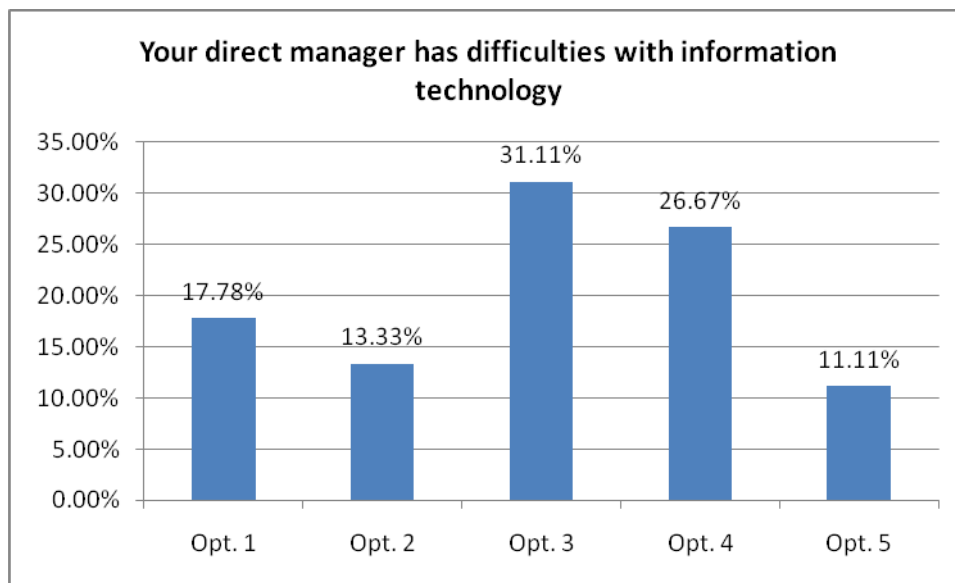


Figure 5.52 Result of Statement 47

Statement 48: Your direct manager is able to use the technical software properly.

Although the first-line managers' skills in general information technology vary a great deal, most of them have no problems using the company's technical software. More than a half (70.00%) of the respondents totally agree and 21.11% somewhat agree with the statement, meaning that most first-line managers are able to use the technical software as properly as the company has expected them to. (See Figure 5.53.)

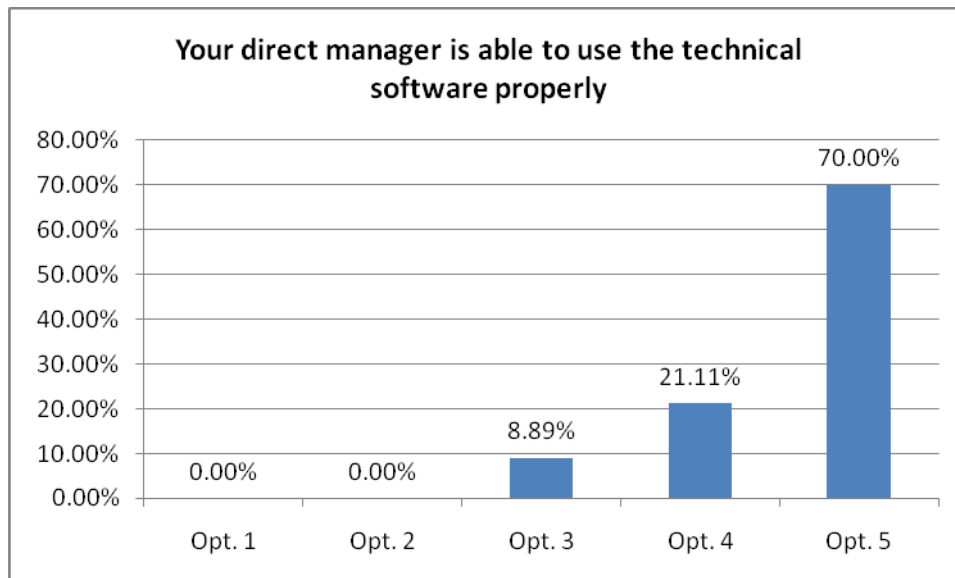


Figure 5.53 Result of Statement 48

Statement 49: You have difficulties with information technology.

More than a half of the respondents (56.67%) totally disagree and 22.22% somewhat disagree that they have difficulties with information technology while only 14.44% of the respondents bravely admit that they do and 6.67% refuse to give their opinions. Information technology is as important for managers as for all agents since the lack of computer skills may cause them difficulties at work. (See Figure 5.54.)

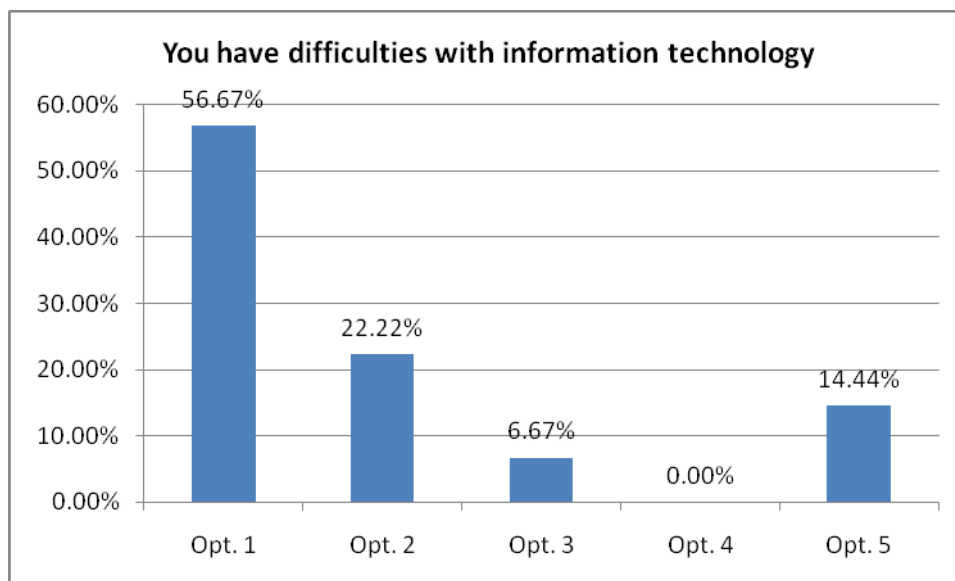


Figure 5.54 Result of Statement 49

Statement 50: You are able to use the technical software properly.

Most of the respondents (70.00%) totally agree with the statement and 13.33% somewhat agree with it, while 16.67% may not be really sure if they are able to use the technical software so properly. However, the overall result is very positive and means that most of the employees in the studied department have the sufficient technical skills that the company expects them to have. (See Figure 5.55.)

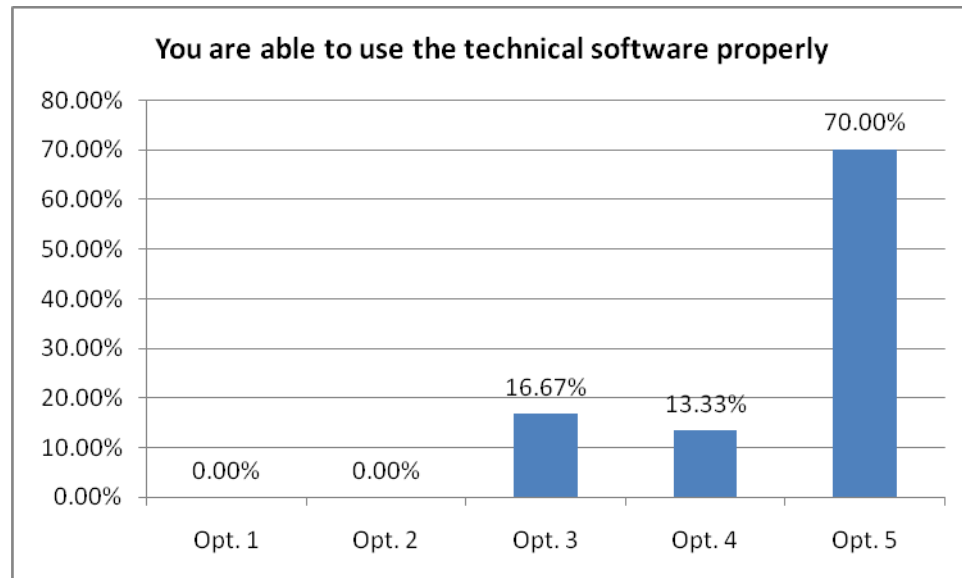


Figure 5.55 Result of Statement 50

5.2.10 Summary of the results

The summarized tables of the survey results are shown in this section. In each table, the percentages of the choices in each statement are listed. The letter "S" in the headlines of some columns stands for "score", which is the number of respondents choosing each option, while "W" is for "weight". A certain weight is assigned for each choice in each statement. If the statement is positive, the option 5 "totally agree" will give 02 points and the option 1 "totally disagree" will give -02 points. The choices in the middle, including "somewhat agree", "I have no idea", and "somewhat disagree", will get respectively 01, 00, and -01 points. The situation will be reverse if the statement is negative. If 100% of the respondents choose the option that gives 02 points, the maximum score for one statement is 02. "Expected score" is the maximum score that a section (or a set of skills) can get, while the real score of that section is summed in the column "summary". "Satisfaction rate" is the percentage of the real

score over the expected score. Finally, comments are given about each set of skills. (See Table 5.2 and Table 5.3.)

The results show that the first-line managers in the studied department seriously lack the four essential management skills, including planning, organizing, directing, and evaluating skills. Softer skills like communication and motivation skills are more satisfactory. Most of them have satisfied the company's expectations in technical knowledge and skills as the satisfaction rate for this set of skills is above average. Training and coaching skills are somewhat poor and more training is required. The company is currently organizing training programs for many first-line managers at some certain levels in planning, recruiting, and training/coaching skills but improvements have not been seen in the results of the survey. A reason can be that managers at such levels to receive such training programs are few or they have not successfully applied what they have learned to real work situations, which means that the transfer of learning may be slow or not so effective. The training course materials will be summarized in the Appendices.

Section	Ques.	Option 1		Option 2		Option 3		Option 4		Option 5		Results	Summary	Expected score	Satisfaction Rate	Comments		
		S	%	S	%	S	%	S	%	S	%						W	
Planning skills (essential)	1	41	45.56%	2	8	8.89%	1	9	10.00%	0	20	22.22%	-1	12	13.33%	-2	0.51	
	2	38	42.22%	2	21	23.33%	1	8	8.89%	0	0	0.00%	-1	23	25.56%	-2	0.57	
	3	41	45.56%	2	28	31.11%	1	11	12.22%	0	0	0.00%	-1	10	11.11%	-2	1.00	
	4	53	58.89%	2	19	21.11%	1	9	10.00%	0	0	0.00%	-1	9	10.00%	-2	1.19	
	5	51	56.67%	2	8	8.89%	1	12	13.33%	0	9	10.00%	-1	10	11.11%	-2	0.90	
Organizing skills (essential)	6	35	38.89%	2	39	43.33%	1	8	8.89%	0	0	0.00%	-1	8	8.89%	-2	1.03	
	7	42	46.67%	2	19	21.11%	1	17	18.89%	0	0	0.00%	-1	12	13.33%	-2	0.88	
	8	11	12.22%	2	28	31.11%	1	22	24.44%	0	16	17.78%	-1	13	14.44%	-2	0.09	
	9	26	28.89%	2	42	46.67%	1	13	14.44%	0	9	10.00%	-1	0	0.00%	-2	0.94	
Directing skills (essential)	10	22	24.44%	-2	19	21.11%	-1	12	13.33%	0	0	0.00%	1	37	41.11%	2	0.12	
	11	29	32.22%	-2	0	0.00%	-1	26	28.89%	0	11	12.22%	1	24	26.67%	2	0.01	
	12	0	0.00%	-2	0	0.00%	-1	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	1	90	100.00%	2	2.00	
	13	21	23.33%	2	17	18.89%	1	5	5.56%	0	34	37.78%	-1	13	14.44%	-2	-0.01	
Communication skills (supporting)	14	0	0.00%	-2	0	0.00%	-1	0	0.00%	0	22	24.44%	1	68	75.56%	2	1.76	
	15	0	0.00%	-2	0	0.00%	-1	0	0.00%	0	22	24.44%	1	68	75.56%	2	1.76	
	16	21	23.33%	2	23	25.56%	1	0	0.00%	0	28	31.11%	-1	18	20.00%	-2	0.01	
	17	39	43.33%	2	22	24.44%	1	12	13.33%	0	17	18.89%	-1	0	0.00%	-2	0.92	
	18	24	26.67%	2	29	32.22%	1	17	18.89%	0	0	0.00%	-1	20	22.22%	-2	0.41	
	19	29	32.22%	2	28	31.11%	1	9	10.00%	0	24	26.67%	-1	0	0.00%	-2	0.69	
	20	17	18.89%	2	24	26.67%	1	10	11.11%	0	27	30.00%	-1	12	13.33%	-2	0.08	
	21	23	25.56%	2	38	42.22%	1	21	23.33%	0	8	8.89%	-1	0	0.00%	-2	0.84	
	22	0	0.00%	-2	0	0.00%	-1	8	8.89%	0	18	20.00%	1	64	71.11%	2	1.62	
																		8.09
																		18
																		44.94%
																		almost satisfactory, training can be provided or not

Table 5.2 Summary of the Survey Results (Part 1)

Section	Ques.	Option 1		Option 2		Option 3		Option 4		Option 5		Results	Summary	Expected score	Satisfaction Rate	Comments	
		S	%	W	%	S	%	W	%	S	%						W
Motivation skills (supporting)	23	0	0.00%	-2	9	10.00%	-1	0	0.00%	0	29	32.22%	1	52	57.78%	2	1.38
	24	29	32.22%	2	12	13.33%	1	18	20.00%	0	31	34.44%	-1	0	0.00%	-2	0.43
	25	0	0.00%	-2	0	0.00%	-1	0	0.00%	0	17	18.89%	1	73	81.11%	2	1.81
	26	0	0.00%	-2	12	13.33%	-1	9	10.00%	0	28	31.11%	1	41	45.56%	2	1.09
	27	0	0.00%	-2	0	0.00%	-1	8	8.89%	0	28	31.11%	1	54	60.00%	2	1.51
	28	0	0.00%	-2	0	0.00%	-1	0	0.00%	0	36	40.00%	1	54	60.00%	2	1.60
	29	0	0.00%	-2	0	0.00%	-1	0	0.00%	0	29	32.22%	1	61	67.78%	2	1.68
	30	0	0.00%	-2	0	0.00%	-1	0	0.00%	0	37	41.11%	1	53	58.89%	2	1.59
	31	0	0.00%	-2	0	0.00%	-1	0	0.00%	0	37	41.11%	1	53	58.89%	2	1.59
	32	0	0.00%	-2	0	0.00%	-1	7	7.78%	0	24	26.67%	1	59	65.56%	2	1.58
33	0	0.00%	-2	0	0.00%	-1	9	10.00%	0	8	8.89%	1	73	81.11%	2	1.71	
34	0	0.00%	-2	0	0.00%	-1	7	7.78%	0	0	0.00%	1	83	92.22%	2	1.84	
35	0	0.00%	-2	0	0.00%	-1	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	1	90	100.00%	2	2.00	
36	0	0.00%	-2	0	0.00%	-1	8	8.89%	0	10	11.11%	1	72	80.00%	2	1.71	
37	0	0.00%	-2	0	0.00%	-1	0	0.00%	0	52	57.78%	1	38	42.22%	2	1.42	
38	30	33.33%	-2	0	0.00%	-1	0	0.00%	0	6	6.67%	1	54	60.00%	2	0.60	
39	21	23.33%	-2	0	0.00%	-1	8	8.89%	0	23	25.56%	1	38	42.22%	2	0.63	
40	33	36.67%	2	8	8.89%	1	7	7.78%	0	31	34.44%	-1	11	12.22%	-2	0.23	
41	33	36.67%	2	19	21.11%	1	10	11.11%	0	11	12.22%	-1	17	18.89%	-2	0.44	
42	29	32.22%	2	27	30.00%	1	12	13.33%	0	13	14.44%	-1	9	10.00%	-2	0.60	
43	34	37.78%	2	18	20.00%	1	9	10.00%	0	8	8.89%	-1	21	23.33%	-2	0.40	
44	41	45.56%	2	10	11.11%	1	7	7.78%	0	32	35.56%	-1	0	0.00%	-2	0.67	
45	22	24.44%	2	19	21.11%	1	23	25.56%	0	18	20.00%	-1	8	8.89%	-2	0.32	
46	0	0.00%	-2	0	0.00%	-1	0	0.00%	0	36	40.00%	1	54	60.00%	2	1.60	
47	16	17.78%	2	12	13.33%	1	28	31.11%	0	24	26.67%	-1	10	11.11%	-2	0.00	
48	0	0.00%	-2	0	0.00%	-1	8	8.89%	0	19	21.11%	1	63	70.00%	2	1.61	
49	51	56.67%	2	20	22.22%	1	6	6.67%	0	0	0.00%	-1	13	14.44%	-2	1.07	
50	0	0.00%	-2	0	0.00%	-1	15	16.67%	0	12	13.33%	1	63	70.00%	2	1.53	
Training & coaching skills (supporting)													21.52	28	76.87%	very good, should be sustainable, no need of training	
Evaluating skills (essential)													3.33	10	33.33%	poor, high need of training	
Technical knowledge & skills (supporting)													1.99	8	24.86%	very poor, very high need of training	
													5.81	10	58.11%	currently satisfactory, occasional training might be needed	

Table 5.3 Summary of the Survey Results (Part 2)

5.3 Results from the observation at the meetings

In this section, only the important remarks from the observation at the meetings will be stated and discussed while the full observation forms of all the meetings can be found in the Appendices. A total number of nine meetings were observed, some of which had different settings and were led by different chairpeople from the others. The number of participants in each meeting also differs from another. The results from the observation can be somewhat subjective; however, with the observation from nine different meetings, some valid and reliable results can still be drawn.

In Meeting 1, the style went gradually from “formal” to “informal”, making the participants more relaxed and motivated to speak their minds about the topic. This somehow reflects the presenter/manager’s good communication skills. The presenter also made very good use of the visual support (e.g. video, slideshow), which means that her technical/computer skills are satisfactory or relatively above average. The discussion was more like a case study, in which the video acted as the case. This shows that the presenter is aware of various training methods and her training skills are also good. The content of the presentation was good in general. The matters presented were relevant and helpful to the staff. The presenter knew where to focus and where not to. Besides, the SSM’s comments were very tactical and motivating, with the mentioning of relevant news. In short, the presenter is a good model of a competent manager with sufficient planning, organizing, communication, motivation, training and coaching, and technical skills. The SSM, beside the above-mentioned skills, also possesses good directing and evaluating skills.

Meeting 2 was more like a team discussion about the happenings. Therefore, it was mostly not structured and prepared at all. The chairlady had some difficulties expressing all her ideas; either that or she tried to give the floor to the other participants. However, it shows that her communication skills are not so effective. After the discussion had been closed and a decision had been made, the chairlady opened the discussion again. She somewhat did not succeed in reaching the goal of communication. The chairlady, as a manager, possesses only good motivation skills. Unlike this meeting, Meeting 3 had neither been planned nor structured but went

pretty smoothly. The chairman's speech was somewhat well-organized and the message seemed to get through to the participants. The chairman made good use of his directing and motivating skills at the same time.

The focus of Meeting 4 was on first-line managers' planning, organizing, and evaluating skills. The memo, which acted as the case in order for the employees to learn how to plan ahead, was handed out to the participants. The purpose of the memos was to set new sales targets for different teams (according to their size) and to increase sales in the year's final quarter. The chairlady tried to encourage and motivate the subordinates with a directive tone that made the meeting sound like a lecture. The chairlady gave detailed information and clear examples around the memos. The chairlady sounded very determined and inspiring as she was stressing on recruiting new agents, expanding the size of teams to increase sales faster. This reflects her very good communication, motivation, and training skills. She is not a first-line manager but belongs to the middle management; therefore, she can be a very effective trainer for the first-line managers in the studied department.

Meeting 5 was somewhat a failure as the the presenter could not have full attention from the participants who were not really focused as most of them were busy discussing private matters. However, she somewhat succeeded in motivating others finally. Taking place immediately after Meeting 5 were the group discussions of the teams in the department. Four group discussions were observed at the same time in the same meeting room. In most teams, the leader acted as the chairperson. The observation leads to the categorization of four different types of team as listed in the following table (Table 5.4):

Type of team	Observation
The "active" team	The team seemed very united and the leader sounded very motivating. The participants who were discussing private matters got scolded by the leader. The leader revised the new promotional program and encouraged the subordinates to win the trip to Singapore. The leader created a strategy for the whole team. They clapped hands quite often to show enthusiasm and determination.

The “quiet” team	The team was discussing very quietly and there were very few participants. The leader seemed to ask the participants about their work problems and then discussed solutions with them.
The “deliberate” team	The participants seemed unfocused and the leader seemed powerless at first. The pace of the meeting seemed slow. The leader first instructed the participants to make plans for the month and then gave them time to make their own plans. When the leader left temporarily, some participants started to discuss private matters.
The “free” team	The so-called “free teams” had at most only two members. Many people were working alone or in pairs. In pairs, one person acted as the teacher and the other as the student; both of them seemed much focused. Pair-work was more like first-line managers tutoring their subordinates rather than a meeting.

Table 5.4 Four Different Observed Types of Team

The results of the observation at the company’s meetings at different levels show that the management skills of the first-line managers in the studied department vary a great deal. Some of them do know how to plan and organize monthly work activities and direct their subordinates to stick with the plan; some are also very good at communicating with and motivating their subordinates; some put efforts in training and coaching their subordinates and monitoring the work results. However, the company has high expectations and require all the first-line managers to do the same. The results of the survey and the observation prove that the first-line managers are highly in need of training courses in management skills, including the most essential skills such as planning, organizing, directing, and evaluating skills. Currently, the company is providing them with management training courses in planning, recruiting, and training skills. The current training materials are summarized in the Appendices.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter, the research questions will be answered in detail. Some remarks concerning the training plan as well as those matters which Company X must keep in mind when organizing the training program will be presented. The theories previously discussed will also be looked back on to see if the actual research has confirmed or denied the writers' or my own preliminary points of view.

6.1 Conclusions

The research was carried out using both the quantitative and the qualitative methods. The results from the survey and the observation helped answer the first research question. A face-to-face and semi-structured interview with a member of the middle management – the Senior Sales Manager – provided more insights in order to answer the second question. Based on the current situation of the first-line managers' management skills and the middle management's expectations of the first-line managers, and by applying the theory on management training, solutions are given to how Company X should organize its management training programs so as to improve the first-line managers' management skills and work performance; and that will be the answer to the final question.

Answer to the research question 1

On one hand, the results from the survey show that the first-line managers in the studied department seriously lack the four essential management skills, including planning, organizing, directing, and evaluating skills. Softer skills like communication and motivation skills are more satisfactory. Most of them have satisfied the company's expectations in technical knowledge and skills. Training and coaching skills are somewhat poor and more training is required. On the other hand, the results of the observation at the company's meetings at different levels show that the management skills of the first-line managers in the studied department vary a great deal. Some of them do know how to plan and organize monthly work activities and direct their subordinates to stick with the plan; some are also very good at communicating with and motivating their subordinates; some put efforts in training and coaching their

subordinates and monitoring the work results. However, the company has high expectations and require all the first-line managers to do the same.

The results of the survey and the observation prove that the first-line managers are highly in need of training courses in management skills, including the most essential skills such as planning, organizing, directing, and evaluating skills. The company is currently organizing training programs for many first-line managers at some certain levels in planning, recruiting, and training/coaching skills but improvements were not seen in the results of the survey. One reason can be that managers at such levels to receive such training programs are few or they have not successfully applied what they have learned to real work situations, which means that the transfer of learning may be slow or not so effective.

Answer to the research question 2

The most important matter pointed out in the interview is that all first-line managers seem to plan but most of them cannot organize work activities according to their plan. Most of them do not stick to the plan and eventually do not reach the expected work performance. When asked by the supervisors, the phrase “we have tried our best” comes up as the answer to all problems. The SSM’s expectation is to train the first-line managers on how to plan and then constantly stick to the plan. Training them on evaluating work performance and the importance of evaluation comes as the second most important requirement.

Answer to the research question 3

The main solution to the company’s current problem is developing a management training program to improve the first-line managers’ management skills, but firstly and more importantly, to make them understand the true importance of management skills in their daily job as a manager. The focus of the training program will be to improve the participants’ skills but a very essential preliminary task to do is to change the attitude and the point of view of a majority of the first-line managers about management. Another important matter is to point out the reason why the company’s current training programs are not working as they are supposed to be and the problems

that affect the participants' ability to comprehend the content of such training programs. I have made a table named "The planning process of the training program", which summarizes the underlying problems, concerns and possible solutions to those matters. The table is included in the Appendices while only some important remarks concerning the training plan are discussed in this section. Those remarks are based on the table mentioned, all the results discussed in the chapter Findings, and other materials included in the Appendices (Appendix 6, Appendix 7, and Appendix 8) consisting of the summary and remarks of the company's current management training materials, the results of a sample feedback on a management training course, and some remarks on the attitude of the employees.

Remarks concerning the training plan

Why should the training program be organized?

The main objective of the training program is to provide the first-line managers with proper skills in planning, organizing, directing, and evaluating. The benefits that the Company or the studied department in particular, will get after the training program include increased professionalism, improved attitude about management skills, but most importantly, increased work performance and business results.

Who will be involved in the training program?

Those who need to be trained are the first-line managers. It is very important for the training program organizers to take into account different factors including the participants' gender, age group, level of education, previous experience as they affect the participants' ability to comprehend. The company is currently providing different training courses to managers at different levels but it cannot assure that all managers at the same level have the same basic knowledge about management. If it is possible, in the training program, the company should split the group to be trained into two to three sub-groups according to the age group or level of education; otherwise, the company must find or invent some "one-size-fits-all" methods to train all the participants in such a program.

The Company's professional trainers, who are absolutely qualified and possess good communication skills, will train the staff. Members of middle management can also provide training. As the Company's employees themselves, the trainers know about its philosophy, objectives, its working environment, and the goals of the training program. The company can also lower the costs by giving the training in-house.

What? – What is the content of the training program and what are the training materials?

The core content of the training program is the four essential management skills, including planning, organizing, directing, and evaluating. The Company is currently giving training courses in recruiting and training/coaching. However, if the course is too heavy, the trainees will be stressed out and they are not likely to remember all the knowledge and skills that were taught in the course. If the Company ever feels like the employees have been trained sufficiently about some skills, they can start improving other skills for the staff. The Company must also decide which skills are more important than the others.

The Company's current management training materials on planning skills are somewhat too theoretical. This can be improved by simplifying the concepts used in the materials to make it more familiar to and understood by the trainees, given that they have so much varied backgrounds with different previous knowledge and skills.

How should the training program be organized?

The Company can make use of several training methods. Seminars and conferences will help the trainees gain new knowledge; a case study will help them improve their skills; and behavior modeling is to help reinforce some desired behaviors and put in practice what the trainees have learned.

The Company must also keep in mind the principles of learning. The goals that are set must be challenging but obtainable. The materials to be used must be meaningful and show the trainees that what they learn can help them improve their work performance. For the method Behavior modeling, the best performance is expected of the model.

Some useful evaluating methods should be taken into consideration, such as quizzes during the course, a final test after the course, feedback on the trainees' action, feedback on the course, noticing the difference between those who have been trained and those who have not, observing the managers' new way of working, monitoring real work results.

Where will the training program be organized?

An in-house training program can still be organized during the working hours. The whole training program is not expected to be too long and most employees can be flexible with their work time; therefore, holding the training program during the working hours would not be a problem for the Company. An outsourced training program is not recommended by the researcher. As mentioned above, the Company's professional trainers, who are absolutely qualified and possess good communication skills, will train the staff. A trainer from outside will not understand enough about the Company's working culture among other matters, given the unconventional business approach which it is utilizing.

When will the training program be organized?

For how long and how often should the training program be organized will be decided by the Company or the studied department itself. As a researcher, I do not have the sufficient power and knowledge to give recommendations on such matters.

6.2 Discussions

I previously wrote "first-line managers are responsible for the daily management of the workers or the employees who actually produce the product or provide the service to the customers". The statement was confirmed during the research process, based on the results of the survey and my observation. It appears that the employees are only willing to talk to their first-line managers. Very often, they are not allowed or too afraid to talk to middle management even when they cannot discuss issues with their direct supervisors.

In the previous chapter about theory, I wrote that first-line managers "interact with most employees on a daily basis and must act like "role models"; if they perform poorly and/or fail to motivate their subordinates, it may affect dramatically the work performance of the company as a whole or the employees may even leave the firm". This point has also been confirmed as the results of my research show that managers that fail to lead a team may not be able to motivate their subordinates to come to meetings and may even fail to keep the subordinates working for the company. Sometimes, poorly performing managers make their subordinates feel like they have nobody to look up to and to talk to when they have work problems or they are unmotivated in their work, and that is when they decide to leave the team and the company. The first-line managers also do pay attention to their subordinates who attend a training program, motivating them and making them understand that the program is necessary and helpful for their job. If a management training program is to be implemented according to this plan, the role of the managers above those who attend such program will also be of utmost importance.

It was concluded in the previous chapter that "first-line managers spend more time than any other level of management on leading the subordinates and they spend more time on directing the employees than on any other management function" and that "the most important role they have to perform is the role of a leader, which deals mostly with interpersonal activities". The two statements still apply, except that a few points should be taken into account. Despite being not satisfactory, the first-line managers' skills in leading are not a problem for Company X right now as the managers can still be trained in order for them to possess equal skills in leading. However, they spend so much time directing the subordinates that they neglect the importance of proper planning, organizing and evaluating. Interpersonal skills cause absolutely no worries for upper management as most first-line managers in the studied department show that they are performing or will be able to perform as effective leaders.

Stated by Reh (2009c) previously, managers in general must be able to identify the training needs of their team members and be able to get that training for them. First-line managers even have to coach all the members of the team, even the ones already well trained, to help them achieve the highest levels of performance. This point is very

important for the company to keep in mind because if the first-line managers are able to train the subordinates themselves, then the company does not need to put such a strong focus and spend so much time on training all the staff. However, the first-line managers' skills in training and coaching are currently very poor and there is a high need for training. If a management training program in training and coaching can be designed properly, the company can be more effective while at the same time, saving a great deal of time and cutting a great deal of costs.

Mondy et al. (2002, 232) argues that managers are typically action-oriented and feel that they are too busy for training and development, that qualified trainers, who beside having good communication skills must also know the company's philosophy, its objectives, its formal and informal information, and the goals of the training program, must be available, and that training implies change, which employees may strongly resist. Mondy et al. (2002) concludes that a well-planned training program can fail if the managers cannot convince the participants of its merits by making them believe that the program will help them achieve their personal and professional goals. The situation is slightly different in the studied department of Company X. The company is willing to organize training programs for managers. Qualified trainers who understand the company and its way of working are also available. However, as training implies change, which employees may strongly resist, it is hard to change the first-line managers' minds, attitudes and their existing ways of working. A majority of them are middle-aged and it may be difficult for them to take in new knowledge or new approaches that they are supposed to apply in their jobs. The managers above those who attend the training program need to motivate their subordinates a great deal and help them understand the importance and the benefits of such program for their personal and professional goals; otherwise the program will fail no matter how well it has been planned.

7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In closing, the research process went smoothly despite the occurrence of some slight difficulties. It was not difficult to get an appointment for the interview with the Senior Sales Manager. However, as the manager was extremely busy most of the time, the

duration of the interview was not long. If I had had more time to discuss with her, the result of the interview could have been even more in-depth. It was easy to get the permission for my observation in the studied department. In theory, it could have been unnatural or uncomfortable for the employees when I was present in their normal working environment. I only discussed with the Senior Sales Manager about my purpose for observation without her telling the subordinates; therefore, the observation went smoothly and its results could reflect the reality.

Although the number of the questionnaires that I collected back and the results of the whole survey were not at all disappointing, I did face some problems during the collecting of the questionnaires. Since the employees in the studied department seemed to always have duties to perform, they somehow seemed quite uncooperative and it was not easy to encourage them to spend time answering the questionnaire which was rather long. I had to make calls to some individuals to motivate them by telling them how important the survey was and how it would contribute to the betterment of the working environment. Included in the Appendices are some remarks on the attitudes of the employees in the studied department (Appendix 8).

During the research process, I realized that the survey was not the heart of the whole research as not all participants might be willing or comfortable to answer the questionnaire with their true thoughts; whereas the interview with the Senior Sales Manager, which was an approach of the qualitative research method, could bring more depth to the research as questions were asked directly and I had the chance to talk face-to-face with the manager, who seemed to have no intentions in making the situation look all nice and fancy. It somewhat also proves that the results from the interview are reliable.

I did not use any traditional methods to analyze the results but came up with a completely new approach to work with the numbers and to draw some reliable conclusions. It was challenging but the results were confirmed by the Senior Sales Manager that they were almost the same as what she had in mind at the time. My final discussion with the Senior Sales Manager took place via e-mail. I sent her the analyzed results of the survey, the reported results of our interview earlier, the results from my observation at the meetings, and a so-called preliminary training plan (or the

Planning process of the training program as in the Appendices). She replied me that what I had found out and what she had in mind were very similar, and then thanked me for my contribution to her department. I promised to keep her updated about the thesis and to send her the completed version once the thesis is ready.

The same ideas about a training program between me and the manager of the studied department can be a very important foundation for future studies. The company can make good use of or make modifications to the preliminary training plan that I proposed. After giving the first-line managers some adequate training, the company can use the same questionnaire which I used to assess the new situation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The survey in English

LETTER OF CONSENT: AGREEMENT ON PARTICIPATION IN THE SURVEY

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1. Introduction

The research project “Training Management Skills for First-line Managers” is carried out by Mr. Luu Tran Nguyen Khang, a student of Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences (Finland). This project is carried out in order to study about the current management skills of first-line managers at areas 02 and 09 of Company X*, therefore to find out the need of improving the current management skills of first-line managers and to increase the work performance of the whole areas.

(Company X is the replacement of the real name of the studied company, which is used in the Vietnamese version of the letter of consent that is handed out to the participant.)*

2. Procedures

Please complete the questionnaire that is handed out to you. The questionnaire consists of 50 questions and the necessary time to answer all of them is approximately 25 to 30 minutes. The answers may be based on your own opinions and experience gained from your time spent on the job or gained from your daily observations at the office.

3. Risks

Your answering the survey questions brings you absolutely no risks. The content of your answers will not affect yourself or your work or anyone else by any means.

4. Benefits

Your answering the survey questions may not bring you any benefits immediately. However, your opinions and contributions will help point out the existing problems in the working environment, helping the management correct those problems, in order to improve the quality of the working environment and the quality of your own work as well as all of your colleagues in the same area, therefore bringing both material and mental benefits for the areas and the company as a whole.

5. Confidentiality

I hereby guarantee the confidentiality of all the information provided by you. The information and answers received from the questionnaire will only be reported as group data, guaranteeing that no harm will be done to your own benefits. All the information will be stored securely and will only be used for the purpose of this research. After the research is completed, the results collected from the questionnaire, as well as the questionnaire itself, will be destroyed completely.

6. Voluntariness

Your participation in this research is absolutely voluntary. You have all the rights to refuse to participate or revoke even after participating in order to guarantee your own benefits.

7. Questions about the research

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me:

Luu Tran Nguyen Khang

Mobile phone: +84-938-170-438

E-Mail: kaylun2009@gmail.com

Agreement:

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above letter of consent. I agree to participate in the research by answering the survey questions. My participation is completely voluntary.

Date month year

Signature of the participant

Signature of the researcher

Luu Tran Nguyen Khang

GENERAL INFORMATION

Please give some general information about yourself:

Gender: Male Female

Age group: 18-25 26-35 36-45 46-55

Level of education: Below college College Above college

- ***“Below college”*** means you have not acquired a college degree.
- ***“College”*** means you have acquired at least one college degree.
- ***“Above college”*** means you have higher degrees such as a master degree or a doctor degree.

Is this your only job at the moment? Yes No

Is this your first job ever? Yes No

INSTRUCTIONS

The total number of survey questions is 50. The time required to complete all 50 questions is approximately 25 to 30 minutes. For each question, please choose only one option by marking (✓) or (✗) inside or filling the whole inside area of the circle that matches your opinion.

THE MEANINGS OF YOUR CHOICES

- ① ALL the situations I have experienced defy the statement.
- ② SOME or MOST of the situations I have experienced defy the statement.
- ③ My experience is not sufficient to support or defy the statement.
- ④ SOME or MOST of the situations I have experienced support the statement.
- ⑤ ALL the situations I have experienced support the statement.

PLANNING SKILLS

1. Your direct manager does not plan monthly activities clearly in advance.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

2. Your direct manager does not disclose the meeting agenda to you before the meeting.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

3. Your direct manager does not analyze and discuss the content of the new announcement with you.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

4. Your direct manager does not analyze and discuss the content of the new announcement with any other member of your team.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

5. Your direct manager does not help you create strategies to achieve your monthly sales targets.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

ORGANIZING SKILLS

6. Your direct manager does not divide the sales targets at the beginning of the month so that you and your colleagues know the minimum sales that each of you must achieve until the end of the month.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

7. Your direct manager focuses more on selling skills rather than recruiting skills.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

8. Your direct manager solves problems according to the importance of each problem, not in order of time.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

9. Your direct manager does not solve all the problems that have arisen.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

DIRECTING SKILL

10. Your direct manager starts addressing the problem with you when your performance is not satisfactory.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

11. Your direct manager only starts addressing the problem with another agent that you know when their performance is very dissatisfactory.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

12. Your direct manager constantly advises you to simultaneously increase sales and recruit new agents.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

13. All new first-line managers do not know how to conduct weekly meetings.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

14. Your direct manager always seems friendly (through non-verbal communication).

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

15. Your direct manager gets along with you quite well (through verbal communication).

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

16. You do not feel comfortable to talk to your direct manager about his/her problems or weaknesses.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

17. You have no intentions to make suggestions in order to help your direct manager solve his/her problems.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

18. During meetings, your direct manager does not seem to have prepared his/her speeches carefully in advance.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

19. Your direct manager's speeches do not make you feel more knowledgeable.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

20. Your direct manager's speeches do not make you feel more confident.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

21. Your direct manager's speeches do not help you solve your problems completely.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

22. Your direct manager clearly informs you about all the new announcements of the company.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

MOTIVATION SKILLS

23. When you talk to your direct manager about your problems and difficulties at work, he/she helps enthusiastically.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

24. Your direct manager never asks you whether or not you have any current problems or difficulties.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

25. Your direct manager orients you to make your future career as a professional manager.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

26. Your direct manager constantly finds ways to help you with your problems or difficulties.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

27. Your direct manager constantly finds ways to help other members of your team with their problems or difficulties.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

28. You feel comfortable to tell your direct manager about your problems or difficulties.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

29. You feel comfortable to contact your direct manager by phone.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

30. You feel comfortable to discuss work matters with your direct manager outside the office.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

31. Your direct manager praises and rewards you if you have good performance.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

32. Your direct manager praises and rewards your team if your team has good performance.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

33. You feel proud of working for the company.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

34. You intend to keep working for the company.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

35. You are willing to learn new things.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

36. Your direct manager seems to be willing to learn new things.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

TRAINING & COACHING SKILLS

37. Your direct manager gives you clear solutions and advice to solve your problems.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

38. Your direct manager has, at least once, gone together with you to a consultation with your customer.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

39. Your direct manager shares with you his/her personal experiences in recruiting new agents.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

40. However, your direct manager does not train you properly on recruiting new agents.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

41. Your direct manager does not talk to you individually to see which skills you do not possess sufficiently.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

EVALUATING SKILLS

42. Your direct manager does not monitor the work performance often.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

43. Your direct manager monitors the work performance only in the last week of the month.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

44. Your direct manager does not evaluate the work performance.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

45. Your direct manager does not draw any lessons from the work results.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

46. Your direct manager is able to answer quickly questions concerning product knowledge.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

47. Your direct manager has difficulties with information technology.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

48. Your direct manager is able to use the technical software properly.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

49. You have difficulties with information technology.

①

②

③

④

⑤

50. You are able to use the technical software properly.

①

②

③

④

⑤

THANK YOU AND HAVE A NICE DAY!



Appendix 2: The survey in Vietnamese

VĂN BẢN THỎA THUẬN VIỆC THAM GIA KHẢO SÁT

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1. Giới thiệu

Đề tài nghiên cứu “Đào tạo Kỹ năng Quản lý cho Quản lý Trực tiếp” (“Training Management Skills for First-line Managers”) được thực hiện bởi Lưu Trần Nguyên Khang, thuộc Đại học Khoa học Ứng dụng Mikkeli (Finland). Đề tài này được thực hiện nhằm tìm hiểu về kỹ năng quản lý hiện tại của quản lý trực tiếp tại khu vực 02 và 09 của công ty Manulife Vietnam để thấy được nhu cầu về việc nâng cao kỹ năng quản lý hiện tại của quản lý trực tiếp, cốt lõi nhằm nâng cao năng suất làm việc của toàn khu vực.

2. Thủ tục

Quý anh/chị vui lòng trả lời bảng câu hỏi khảo sát được phát ra. Bảng câu hỏi bao gồm 50 câu hỏi và thời gian cần thiết để hoàn thành là khoảng 25-30 phút. Những câu hỏi xoay quanh ý kiến và kinh nghiệm của bản thân anh/chị rút ra từ quá trình làm việc của chính mình hoặc thông qua việc quan sát các đồng nghiệp tại văn phòng.

3. Rủi ro

Việc anh/chị trả lời những câu hỏi khảo sát hoàn toàn không có rủi ro. Nội dung trả lời của anh/chị hoàn toàn không gây khó khăn hay ảnh hưởng xấu đến lợi ích cá nhân hoặc lợi ích công việc của anh/chị hoặc bất kỳ ai khác.

4. Lợi ích

Việc anh/chị trả lời những câu hỏi khảo sát không mang lại lợi ích trực tiếp trong thời gian ngắn. Tuy nhiên, những ý kiến và góp ý của anh/chị góp phần chỉ ra được những vấn đề tồn tại trong môi trường làm việc, giúp bộ phận quản lý khắc phục những vấn đề đó, nâng cao chất lượng môi trường làm việc và chất lượng công việc của bản thân anh/chị cũng như tất cả đồng nghiệp cùng khu vực, mang lại lợi ích vật chất và tinh thần cho khu vực cũng như công ty.

5. Tính bảo mật

Tôi xin bảo đảm tính bảo mật của tất cả thông tin do anh/chị cung cấp. Thông tin thu được từ bảng câu hỏi khảo sát sẽ chỉ được báo cáo dưới dạng thông tin theo nhóm, bảo đảm không ảnh hưởng đến lợi ích cá nhân của quý anh/chị. Tất cả những thông tin sẽ được lưu trữ một cách an toàn và chỉ được sử dụng cho mục đích của nghiên cứu này. Sau khi nghiên cứu được hoàn thành, kết quả thu được từ bảng câu hỏi khảo sát, cũng như bảng câu hỏi khảo sát, sẽ được tiêu hủy.

6. Tính tự nguyện

Việc tham gia của anh/chị trong nghiên cứu này là hoàn toàn tự nguyện. Anh/chị có quyền từ chối tham gia hoặc xin rút lại ngay khi đã tham gia nhằm bảo đảm lợi ích cá nhân của anh/chị.

7. Thắc mắc về nghiên cứu

Nếu anh/chị có bất kỳ câu hỏi nào, xin vui lòng liên lạc theo thông tin bên dưới:

Lưu Trần Nguyên Khang
 Điện thoại: 0938-170-438
 E-Mail: kaylun2009@gmail.com

Thoả thuận:

Tôi đã đọc, đã hiểu, và đã nhận được một bản sao của văn bản thoả thuận nói trên. Tôi chấp nhận việc tham gia vào quá trình nghiên cứu bằng cách trả lời bảng câu hỏi khảo sát trên tinh thần tự nguyện.

Ngày tháng năm

Người tham gia nghiên cứu ký tên

Người nghiên cứu ký tên



Lưu Trần Nguyên Khang

BẢNG KHẢO SÁT Ý KIẾN



THÔNG TIN CÁ NHÂN

Xin vui lòng cho biết một số thông tin cá nhân về bản thân anh/chị:

- Giới tính: Nam Nữ
- Độ tuổi: 18-25 26-35 36-45 46-55
- Trình độ học vấn: Dưới đại học Đại học Trên đại học
- Đây có phải công việc hiện tại duy nhất của anh/chị không? Phải Không phải
- Đây có phải công việc đầu tiên của anh/chị không? Phải Không phải

HƯỚNG DẪN

Bảng khảo sát có tổng cộng 50 câu hỏi. Thời gian cần thiết để hoàn thành tất cả 50 câu hỏi này là khoảng 25 đến 30 phút. Đối với mỗi câu hỏi, xin vui lòng chọn một phương án duy nhất bằng cách đánh dấu (✓) hoặc (✗) bên trong hình tròn hoặc tô đậm toàn bộ vùng bên trong hình tròn phù hợp với lựa chọn của anh/chị.

Ý NGHĨA CỦA CÁC LỰA CHỌN

- ① **Hoàn toàn không đồng ý** theo hiểu biết và kinh nghiệm của bản thân tôi.
- ② **Phần nào không đồng ý** theo hiểu biết và kinh nghiệm của bản thân tôi.
- ③ Tôi không đủ hiểu biết hoặc kinh nghiệm để nêu ý kiến.
- ④ **Phần nào đồng ý** theo hiểu biết và kinh nghiệm của bản thân tôi.
- ⑤ **Hoàn toàn đồng ý** theo hiểu biết và kinh nghiệm của bản thân tôi.

KỸ NĂNG LÊN KẾ HOẠCH

1. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị không lên kế hoạch hoạt động rõ ràng cho mỗi tháng.
① ② ③ ④ ⑤
2. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị không cho anh/chị biết nội dung và chương trình họp (*meeting agenda*) trước mỗi cuộc họp.
① ② ③ ④ ⑤
3. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị không phân tích và thảo luận nội dung các thông cáo mới của công ty với anh/chị.
① ② ③ ④ ⑤
4. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị không phân tích và thảo luận nội dung các thông cáo mới của công ty với bất kỳ thành viên nào khác trong nhóm của anh/chị.
① ② ③ ④ ⑤
5. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị không giúp anh/chị đề ra chiến lược để đạt chỉ tiêu doanh thu (*sales target*) hàng tháng.
① ② ③ ④ ⑤

KỸ NĂNG TỔ CHỨC

6. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị không phân chia chỉ tiêu doanh thu (*sales target*) vào đầu mỗi tháng để anh/chị và đồng nghiệp biết được doanh thu tối thiểu mà anh/chị phải đạt trước cuối tháng.
① ② ③ ④ ⑤
7. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị đặt nặng tầm quan trọng của kỹ năng kinh doanh hơn là kỹ năng tuyển dụng.
① ② ③ ④ ⑤
8. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị giải quyết các vấn đề tùy theo mức độ quan trọng của mỗi vấn đề, chứ không theo thứ tự thời gian.
① ② ③ ④ ⑤
9. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị không giải quyết được hết tất cả các vấn đề nảy sinh.
① ② ③ ④ ⑤

KỸ NĂNG CHỈ ĐẠO

10. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị thảo luận trực tiếp với anh/chị về các vấn đề anh/chị gặp phải khi kết quả công việc của anh/chị không đạt yêu cầu.
① ② ③ ④ ⑤

11. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị chỉ thảo luận trực tiếp với một đại lý khác mà anh/chị biết về các vấn đề họ gặp phải khi kết quả công việc của họ cực kỳ không đạt yêu cầu.
- ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
12. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị thường xuyên nhắc nhở anh/chị về việc vừa tăng doanh thu và vừa tuyển dụng đại lý mới.
- ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
13. Tất cả quản lý mới được thăng cấp đều không biết cách tổ chức họp hàng tuần (*weekly meetings*).
- ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

KỸ NĂNG GIAO TIẾP

14. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị luôn tỏ ra thân thiện (thông qua hành động, cử chỉ và thái độ).
- ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
15. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị hoà đồng và cởi mở với anh/chị (thông qua việc giao tiếp trực tiếp.)
- ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
16. Anh/chị không cảm thấy thoải mái khi nói với quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị về các vấn đề hay khuyết điểm trong công việc của họ.
- ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
17. Anh/chị hoàn toàn không có ý định đề xuất ý kiến nhằm giúp quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị giải quyết hay khắc phục các vấn đề trong công việc của họ.
- ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
18. Trong các cuộc họp, quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị có vẻ như không chuẩn bị kỹ từ trước nội dung trình bày.
- ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
19. Nội dung do quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị trình bày trong các cuộc họp hoặc lời khuyên của họ không giúp nâng cao kiến thức chuyên môn cho anh/chị.
- ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
20. Nội dung do quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị trình bày trong các cuộc họp hoặc lời khuyên của họ không giúp nâng cao sự tự tin trong công việc của anh/chị.
- ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
21. Nội dung do quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị trình bày trong các cuộc họp hoặc lời khuyên của họ không giải quyết triệt để được vấn đề mà anh/chị gặp phải.
- ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
22. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị thông báo rõ ràng với anh/chị về tất cả các thông cáo mới của công ty.
- ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

KỸ NĂNG ĐỘNG VIÊN

23. Khi anh/chị nói với quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị về các vấn đề hoặc khó khăn của anh/chị trong công việc, họ giúp đỡ một cách nhiệt tình.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

24. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị không bao giờ hỏi xem anh/chị có bất kỳ vấn đề hoặc khó khăn nào trong công việc hay không.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

25. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị định hướng cho anh/chị theo con đường quản lý chuyên nghiệp trong tương lai.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

26. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị tìm mọi cách để giúp đỡ anh/chị giải quyết các vấn đề hoặc khó khăn của anh/chị trong công việc.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

27. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị tìm mọi cách để giúp đỡ các thành viên khác trong nhóm của anh/chị giải quyết các vấn đề hoặc khó khăn của họ trong công việc.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

28. Anh/chị cảm thấy thoải mái khi nói cho quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị biết về các vấn đề hoặc khó khăn của anh/chị trong công việc.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

29. Anh/chị cảm thấy thoải mái khi liên lạc với quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị qua điện thoại.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

30. Anh/chị cảm thấy thoải mái khi thảo luận các vấn đề công việc với quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị bên ngoài phạm vi văn phòng.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

31. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị khen thưởng anh/chị nếu anh/chị đạt thành tích tốt trong công việc.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

32. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị khen thưởng cả nhóm của anh/chị nếu cả nhóm đạt thành tích tốt trong công việc.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

33. Anh/chị cảm thấy tự hào khi là một thành viên trong công ty.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

34. Anh/chị có ý định làm việc với công ty lâu dài.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

35. Anh/chị luôn sẵn sàng học hỏi.	①	②	③	④	⑤
36. Anh/chị nhận thấy quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị luôn sẵn sàng học hỏi.	①	②	③	④	⑤

KỸ NĂNG ĐÀO TẠO VÀ HƯỚNG DẪN					
37. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị đưa ra giải pháp và lời khuyên rõ ràng, cụ thể để giải quyết các vấn đề của anh/chị trong công việc.	①	②	③	④	⑤
38. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị đã từng, ít nhất một lần, đi cùng với anh/chị để hỗ trợ tư vấn khách hàng của anh/chị.	①	②	③	④	⑤
39. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị chia sẻ với anh/chị kinh nghiệm cá nhân trong việc tuyển dụng đại lý mới.	①	②	③	④	⑤
40. Tuy nhiên, quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị không đào tạo anh/chị một cách bài bản về việc tuyển dụng đại lý mới.	①	②	③	④	⑤
41. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị không gặp riêng anh/chị để thảo luận các kỹ năng còn hạn chế ở anh/chị.	①	②	③	④	⑤

KỸ NĂNG ĐÁNH GIÁ					
42. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị không thường xuyên theo dõi kết quả công việc.	①	②	③	④	⑤
43. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị chỉ theo dõi kết quả công việc vào tuần cuối cùng của tháng.	①	②	③	④	⑤
44. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị không đánh giá kết quả công việc.	①	②	③	④	⑤
45. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị không rút kinh nghiệm từ kết quả công việc của những tháng trước.	①	②	③	④	⑤

KIẾN THỨC VÀ KỸ NĂNG CHUYÊN MÔN

46. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị có thể trả lời nhanh chóng các câu hỏi liên quan đến kiến thức sản phẩm.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

47. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị gặp khó khăn với công nghệ thông tin.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

48. Quản lý trực tiếp của anh/chị có thể sử dụng phần mềm chuyên môn (Comprop) một cách thành thạo.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

49. Bản thân anh/chị gặp khó khăn với công nghệ thông tin.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

50. Bản thân anh/chị có thể sử dụng phần mềm chuyên môn (Comprop, v.v.) một cách thành thạo.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

**ANH/CHỊ ĐÃ GÓP PHẦN GIÚP CHO NGHIÊN CỨU NÀY ĐƯỢC
HOÀN THÀNH. XIN CẢM ƠN ANH/CHỊ RẤT NHIỀU!**



Appendix 3: The preliminary questionnaire for the Senior Sales Manager

THE PRELIMINARY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE SSM

Set of skills	Questions	Her answers
Planning skills	Do first-line managers (FLMs) plan monthly activities clearly in advance?	Yes, not 100%
	Do FLMs disclose the meeting agenda to their subordinates before the meeting?	Yes, not 100%
	Do FLMs analyze and discuss the content of the new announcement with their subordinates?	Yes, not 100%
	Do FLMs help their subordinates create strategies to achieve their monthly sales targets?	Yes, not 100%
Organizing skills	Do FLMs divide the sales targets for their subordinates at the beginning of the month?	Yes, not 100%
	Do FLMs stress with their subordinates the importance of both selling and recruiting?	Yes
	Do FLMs solve all the problems that have arisen in their own work as well as their subordinates'?	Yes
Directing skills	Do FLMs try to find out their subordinates' problems or difficulties when the work performance is not satisfactory?	Yes, not 100%
	Do FLMs usually advise their subordinates to improve their work performance?	Yes, not 100%
	Do FLMs hold weekly meetings on a regular basis?	Yes, not 100%
Communication skills	Are FLMs friendly with their subordinates?	Yes
	Are FLMs open with their subordinates?	Yes
	Do FLMs encourage their subordinates to open up about their work problems or difficulties?	Yes
	Do FLMs listen to their subordinates' ideas or suggestions?	Yes
	Do FLMs prepare carefully in advance matters to discuss in meetings?	Yes, not 100%
	In meetings, do FLMs present or express all matters clearly?	Yes
	Do FLMs inform their subordinates about all the new announcements of the company?	Yes, not 100%

Motivation skills	Do FLMs enthusiastically help their subordinates?	Yes
	Do FLMs ask their subordinates about their current difficulties?	Yes
	Do FLMs orient their subordinates to aim at higher positions in their job?	Yes
	Do FLMs constantly find ways to help their subordinates?	Yes, not 100%
	Do FLMs listen to their subordinates about their work problems or difficulties?	Yes
	Do FLMs reward the subordinates who have good work performance?	Yes
	Do FLMs make their subordinates feel committed to and proud of their job and the company?	Yes
	Do FLMs have a learning spirit and be willing to learn new things?	Yes
Training & coaching skills	Do FLMs give their subordinates useful work advice and solutions?	Yes
	Do FLMs share with their subordinates their own work experience?	Yes
	Do FLMs properly train their subordinates on recruiting skills?	Yes, but not so properly
	Do FLMs try to find out what skills are lacking from their subordinates?	Yes, not 100%
	Do FLMs instruct their subordinates on some necessary skills for the job?	Yes
Evaluating skills	Do FLMs frequently monitor their subordinates' work performance?	Yes, not 100%
	Do FLMs evaluate that work performance?	Yes, not 100%
	Do FLMs draw lessons from their own past work performance and the work results of the team?	Yes, not 100%
Technical knowledge & skills	Are FLMs able to answer quickly questions concerning product knowledge?	Yes
	Do FLMs possess necessary skills in information technology?	Yes, not 100%
	Do FLMs use technical software properly and fluently?	Yes, not 100%

Appendix 4: The results of the interview with the Senior Sales Manager

INTERVIEW RESULTS

Time: Wednesday, 29 August 2012 – 11:30 to 12:00

Venue: The SSM's office

Interviewer: Mr. K (the researcher)

Interviewee: Ms. L (Senior Sales Manager)

Procedure: Ms. L answered a list of questions which had been given to her beforehand by the researcher. The questions revolve around the eight sets of management skills. Ms. L was asked to evaluate the management skills of the first-line managers in order to give the researcher an overview of what would be to study in the department.

Results:

Set of skills	Results
Planning skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not 100% first-line managers (FLMs) plan monthly activities in advance. - Not 100% FLMs disclose the meeting agenda before the meeting. - Not 100% FLMs analyze and discuss the content of the company's new announcements with their subordinates. - Not 100% FLMs help their subordinates create strategies to achieve monthly sales targets.
Organizing skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not 100% FLMs divide the sales targets at the beginning of the month so that their subordinates know the minimum sales that each of them must achieve until the end of the month. - All FLMs emphasize the importance of both selling and recruiting. - All FLMs succeed in solving all problems and difficulties in their own and their subordinates' work life.
Directing skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not 100% FLMs are willing to find out their subordinates' problems or difficulties when their work performance is not satisfactory. - Not 100% FLMs frequently advise their subordinates to increase work performance. - Not 100% FLMs hold weekly meetings on a regular basis.
Communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All FLMs are open and friendly to their subordinates. - All FLMs encourage their subordinates to be open about their own problems and difficulties so that help can be provided. - All FLMs listen to their subordinates' ideas and suggestions. - Not 100% FLMs prepare carefully their speeches before meetings.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All FLMs can present clearly all important matters in meetings. - Not 100% FLMs inform their subordinates about new announcements of the company.
Motivation skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All FLMs are always willing to help their subordinates. - All FLMs usually ask their subordinates about the subordinates' current problems and difficulties. - All FLMs orient their subordinates to aim for higher positions in their job. - Not 100% FLMs constantly find ways to help their subordinates. - All FLMs listen to their subordinates about the subordinates' problems and difficulties. - All FLMs reward the subordinates with good work performance. - All FLMs make their subordinates feel proud and committed to the company. - All FLMs have a learning spirit and are always willing to learn new things.
Training & coaching skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All FLMs give their subordinates useful advice and solutions to their problems. - All FLMs share their own working experience with their subordinates. - All FLMs train their subordinates on recruiting new agents but none of them succeed in doing so properly by organizing sessions or giving out materials, etc. - Not 100% FLMs try to find out which necessary skills are lacking from their subordinates. - All FLMs instruct their subordinates on skills necessary for their work.
Evaluating skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not 100% FLMs frequently monitor the work performance of their subordinates. - Not 100% FLMs evaluate that work performance. - Not 100% FLMs draw lessons from the work performance of themselves and their teams.
Technical knowledge and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All FLMs are able to answer quickly questions concerning product knowledge. - Not 100% FLMs possess necessary skills in information technology.

	- Not 100% FLMs can use the technical software fluently and successfully.
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Remarks:

- The four essential sets of skills for a first-line manager are planning skills, organizing skills, directing skills, and evaluating skills. If we look at these skills from the above table, we see that in planning, directing, and evaluating, most first-line managers do not possess these skills sufficiently.
- Planning is the most critical skills for all working people, not just the first-line managers. We take it for granted that most employees are able to plan their own activities but in managing others, not all first-line managers are successful in doing so.
- Organizing skills seem better but the first point in this part in the table is related to planning. If the first-line managers fail to plan and divide the sales targets, it will lead to a chain reaction of failure in managing as they cannot monitor and evaluate the work performance of the team. Without planning properly, they also cannot direct their subordinates by telling them what to do next after one job is accomplished.
- It is good that most first-line managers possess quite good soft skills (communication skills and motivation skills). They are supporting skills that are also important to first-line managers.
- Training and coaching skills are fine but first-line managers should take chances to train their subordinates properly on recruiting as all employees have already been trained very properly by the company on selling skills.
- Product knowledge of all first-line managers is excellent. The lack of skills in general knowledge about information technology can be acceptable; however, all first-line managers should be able to use the technical software as it is one essential part of the job.
- The most important point mentioned during the interview is that all first-line managers seem to plan but most of them cannot organize work activities according to their plan. Most of them do not stick to the plan and eventually do not reach the expected work performance. When asked by the supervisors, the phrase “we have tried our best” comes up as the answer to all problems.
- The SSM’s expectation is to train the first-line managers on how to plan and then constantly stick to the plan. Training them on evaluating work performance and the importance of evaluation comes as the second most important requirement.

Appendix 5: The observation results at the company's meetings

OBSERVATION RESULTS

Meeting 1

Time: Wednesday, 29 August 2012 – 08:45 to 10:30

Venue: Company's meeting room

Number of participants: approx. 150

Setting: formal

Manner: semi-formal

Chairperson: Ms. L (Senior Sales Manager)

Presenter: Ms. T (Branch Manager)

Content:

1. Physical exercise
2. Video about the topic "Selling combs to monks"
3. Discussion about the video
4. Presentation about the day's topic "12 Essential Skills for a Professional Salesperson"
5. Discussion about the presentation
6. Comments from the Senior Sales Manager (SSM)
7. Evaluation of the SSM about the month's achievements
8. Announcement about schedule and agenda of the next meeting
9. Closing

Remarks:

- Physical exercise at the beginning of the meeting is a way to make the employees feel happy and active in the morning.
- The formal setting does not make the whole meeting "stiff". This is the working culture in most Vietnamese companies.
- The style goes gradually from "formal" to "informal", making the participants more relaxed and motivated to speak their minds about the topic.
- The presenter makes very good use of the visual support (e.g. video, slideshow). The discussion is more like a case study, where the video acts as the case. This shows that the presenter is aware of various training methods.
- The content of the presentation is good in general. The matters presented are relevant and helpful to the staff. The presenter knows where to focus and where not to.
- The SSM's comments are very tactical and motivating, with the mentioning of relevant news.

- The presenter is a good model of a competent manager with sufficient planning, organizing, communication, motivation, training and coaching, and technical skills.
- The SSM, beside the above-mentioned skills, also possesses good directing and evaluating skills.

Meeting 2

Time: Wednesday, 29 August 2012 – 10:30 to 12:00

Venue: Company's meeting room

Number of participants: approx. 25

Setting: informal

Manner: informal

Chairperson: Ms. K (Area Manager)

Content:

1. Summary of the previous meeting (Meeting 1)
2. Summing up the team's performance during the last month
3. Discussion about preparation for the next meeting

Remarks:

- The meeting is more like a team discussion about the happenings. Therefore, it is mostly not structured and prepared at all.
- The chairlady has some difficulties expressing all her ideas. Either that or she tries to give the floor to the other participants.
- After the discussion is closed and a decision is made, the chairlady opens the discussion again. She somewhat does not succeed in reaching the goal of communication.
- The chairlady, as a manager, possesses only good motivation skills.

Meeting 3

Time: Wednesday, 29 August 2012 – 12:30 to 13:30 (during lunch)

Venue: Restaurant H.K.

Number of participants: 03

Setting: very informal

Manner: very informal

Chairperson: Mr. N (Training Unit Manager)

Content:

1. Chairman asking about subordinates' problems
2. Chairman giving solutions to those problems
3. Chairman helping subordinates make plans
4. Chairman creating strategies for the team

Remarks:

- The meeting has neither been planned nor structured but goes pretty smoothly.
- The chairman's speech is somewhat well-organized and the message seems to get through to the participants.
- The chairman makes good use of his directing and motivating skills at the same time.

Meeting 4

Time: Thursday, 06 September 2012 – 8:45 to 9:30

Venue: Company's office

Number of participants: approx. 20

Setting: informal

Manner: semi-formal

Chairperson: Ms. L (Senior Sales Manager)

Content:

1. Discussing new promotional program (new bonus system for managers)
2. Handing out memos with projected bonuses
3. Explaining commissions and bonuses
4. Analyzing information on the memos
5. Groups discussing the memos

Remarks:

- The meeting should start strictly on time (at 8:30) but most participants come late, so the chairlady gets angry.
- The focus is on first-line managers' planning, organizing, and evaluating skills.
- The purpose of the memos is to set new sales targets for different teams (according to their size) and to increase sales in the year's final quarter.
- The chairlady tries to encourage and motivate the subordinates.
- The memo acts as a case in order for the subordinates to learn how to plan ahead.
- The chairlady's tone is directive, making the meeting sound like a lecture.
- The chairlady gives detailed information and clear examples around the memos.

- The chairlady sounds very determined and inspiring as she stresses on recruiting new agents, expanding the size of teams to increase sales faster.
- The tone of the meeting transforms gradually from “formal” to “informal”.
- There are a lot of noises by other staff as the meeting environment is inappropriate (because the main meeting room is occupied).

Meeting 5

Time: Monday, 10 September 2012 – 8:45 to 9:15

Venue: Company’s meeting room

Number of participants: approx. 50

Setting: formal

Manner: semi-formal

Chairperson: Ms. S (District Manager)

Content:

1. The true meaning of recruiting
2. Promotional program: A trip to Singapore

Remarks:

- The presenter cannot have full attention from the participants.
- The presenter somewhat succeeds in motivating others finally.
- The participants are not really focused as most of them are busy discussing private matters.

Group meetings of different teams

Time: Monday, 10 September 2012 – 9:15 to 9:45

Venue: Company’s meeting room

Remarks:

- After the general meeting, each team with a leader gathers and discusses team matters.
- In most teams, the leader acts as the chairperson.
- The observation leads to the categorization of four different types of team as listed in the following table:

1. The “active” team	- The team seems very united and the leader sounds very motivating.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants discussing private matters get scolded by the leader. - The leader revises the new promotional program and encourages the subordinates to win the trip to Singapore. - The leader creates strategy for the whole team. - They clap quite often to show enthusiasm and determination.
2. The “quiet” team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The team discusses very quietly. - There are very few participants. - The leader seems to ask participants about their work problems and discusses solutions with them.
3. The “deliberate” team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The participants seem unfocused and the leader seems powerless at first. - The pace of the meeting seems slow. - The leader instructs the participants to make plans for the month. - The leader gives them time to make their own plans. - When the leader leaves temporarily, some participants start to discuss private matters.
4. The “free” team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The so-called “free teams” have at most only two members. - Many people work alone or in pairs. - In pairs, one person acts as a teacher and the other as a student; both of them seem much focused. - Pair-work is more like first-line managers tutoring their subordinates rather than a meeting.

Appendix 6: Summary and remarks of the company's current management training materials

MANAGEMENT TRAINING MATERIALS

Book 1: Thinking and planning

- The content is adequate but not so well-organized.
- Management skills for first-line managers mentioned:
 1. Planning
 2. Leading/Directing
 3. Motivating
 4. Recruiting
 5. Training/Coaching
 6. Monitoring
- The skills are mentioned but not in details.
- Even leadership skills are mentioned briefly.
- There are several tests for managers to analyze their leadership traits.
- Managers are encouraged to make plans on paper. A sample plan is given, including the following parts:
 1. Vision, mission
 2. Objectives in five years
 3. Recruiting process
 4. Specified steps of introduction
 5. Orienting new agents
 6. Training new agents
 7. Monitoring
 8. Reward system
 9. Individual development program
 10. Supporting activities
 11. Benefits for agents
- The importance of P.R.I.D.E (Production growth – Recruiting – Individual focused – Develop multipliers – Evaluate) is stressed.
- Managers are taught to make plans for five years and then break it down into smaller parts, like annual plans. Managers are supposed to forecast the activities and changes in the plan every month, and check the plan every week. Managers are also taught to evaluate the real performance and compare with the plan at the end of the year to

categorize different groups of agents (A: Appointed agents – B: Basic agents – C: Commitment agents – D: Delivery agents – E: Established agents).

- Seven steps in the planning process are explained:
 1. Collecting information, making the SWOT analysis
 2. Establishing goals, using the SMART model (Specific – Measurable – Achievable – Relevant to company's goal – Time bound)
 3. Drafting the plan to reach the goals (recruiting activities, management training and selling skills training activities, basic selling activities, advanced selling activities)
 4. Identifying who will be involved in these activities
 5. Defining the necessary time to complete
 6. Holding meetings to implement the plan
 7. Monitoring and evaluating real performance thoroughly
- Planning skills are stressed the most.

Book 2: Selecting and attracting

- The importance of recruiting is stressed.
- Managers are taught to select potential recruits using the KASH model (Knowledge – Attitude – Skills – Habits).
- While Book 1 trains managers on how to make plans to act, Book 2 trains them on how to make plans to recruit. It guides them through the whole process from planning the recruitment to recruiting the right people for the job.
- A list of example interview questions and a sample sheet to evaluate each interviewee are also given.
- Several scripts, pamphlets and example conversations of attracting potential recruits are provided in a very demonstrative way. The materials give managers plenty of supporting tools to help them recruit the most valuable people.

Book 3: Teaching and training

- The book is a guide that helps managers convey the knowledge they have been taught to their subordinates.
- Managers are shown how to make a training session interesting and attractive to the participants.

- Several matters to train agents are mentioned, such as how to find and identify potential customers, how to make calls to potential customers, approaches to identify their needs, which information to collect from them, selling techniques, dealing and closing tactics.
- Managers are supposed to train their subordinates how to make plans and how to organize their activities according to their plans.
- The purpose of teaching is to improve the subordinates' knowledge and attitude; the purpose of training is to improve their skills and habit.

Appendix 7: The results of a sample feedback on a management training course

A SAMPLE TRAINING COURSE FEEDBACK

Training course: Management Skills for Managers I

Time: 06-07 September 2012, 08 hours per day

No.	Matters/Questions	Choices/Answers
1	The content of the training course	Excellent
2	The quality of the course material	Good
3	The relevance of the content to the aim of the course	Relevant
4	The usefulness of the course material	Very useful
5	The teaching skill of the trainer	Very good
6	The helpfulness of the trainer's teaching skill to your job	Very helpful
7	Does the trainer master the content of the course?	Totally
8	Does the trainer convey the content clearly and completely?	Relatively
9	The practicality and usefulness of role playing in the course	Especially practical and useful
10	Does the course achieve the intended purpose?	Absolutely
11	Is this course useful to you in insurance selling/business management?	Especially useful
12	Three most useful matters you have learnt from the course	Recruiting methods Methods to plan for teams Methods to evaluate performance and process
13	Improvements that need making for the course to be more useful and interesting	Training location must be prepared carefully List of trainees must be informed soon and clearly

Appendix 8: Some remarks on the attitude of the employees

OBSERVATION OF THE EMPLOYEES' ATTITUDE

Positive	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employees are participative in general meetings. - Some employees are willing to help out in promotional events, e.g. giving singing or dancing performances at special events, giving speeches, sharing experience to all colleagues, etc. - The overall attitude is happy and positive. - A requirement of their job is to smile all the time. - Managers are quite nice and friendly to their subordinates. Some of them are strict, but they are for some reasons and for the better good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Vietnamese working culture has to be taken into account: many employees come late to meetings; the visible attitude is always nice. - Employees spend much time discussing private matters. - Most of them try to look after their personal interests rather than that of the company, reflecting in their ignoring of completing a survey that contributes to the betterment of the working environment. - The results of the survey do not 100% confirm the SSM's opinions about the way the employees work and behave. This is like in schools where some or most students are not eager to give honest feedback to courses. - Such difference is inevitable as most employees are trying to play nice and afraid to give negative opinions in the survey. Although it has been promised in the letter of consent that 100% confidentiality is guaranteed, it is true that some of them are still not positive that their signed names will not somehow be disclosed. - Some complain that their direct managers care so much about their own interests and neglect to ask and help with the subordinates' problems and difficulties.

Appendix 9: The planning process of the training program

PLANNING PROCESS OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM

No.	Matters	Questions / Concerns	Answers / Solutions
1	Existence of current training program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are organizational goals being met or not? - And what are these goals? - What knowledge, skills, and abilities are trainees supposed to have after the training is completed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - According to the results from interview with the SSM, goals in first-line managers' management skills are not being met. - Goals: FLMs' proper skills in planning, organizing, and evaluating.
2	Needs assessment: Organizational analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the company's missions? - What are the strategic goals? - What are the corporate plans? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Objective: Manulife Vietnam provides excellent services and commits to meet the financial needs of customers through knowledge, skills and integrity of our employees, agents and other representatives of The Company. - Goals and plans concerning management are not publicly disclosed, which is understandable. - However, it is taken for granted that every single company strives to achieve the highest level of professionalism.
3	Needs assessment: Task analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the trainees supposed to do? - How are they doing it? - What do they think about their own work performance? - What do their supervisors think about their (the employees') work performance? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Must be done by the company (middle management) themselves. - Supervisor's thoughts are stated in the results from the interview with the SSM.
4	Needs assessment: Individual analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who needs to be trained? - What kind of training is needed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First-line managers need to be trained. - Training on management skills is needed.

5	Availability of trainers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are they sufficiently qualified? - Do they have good communication skills? - Do they know enough about the company's philosophy, objectives, its working environment, and the goals of the training program? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The company's professional trainers are absolutely qualified, with good communication skills. Middle management can also provide training. As the company's employees themselves, the trainers know about its philosophy, objectives, its working environment, and the goals of the training program.
6	Schedule of the training program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How to schedule the program? - Do all the employees have full-time duties to perform? - Is it necessary to organize the training program outside working hours? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scheduled by the company. The company has given so many training programs to the employees so this will not be a hard task. - It is not necessary to organize the training program outside working hours since that will discourage the participants and decrease their motivation.
7	What's in it for the trainees?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the personal and professional goals of the trainees? - Can Middle Management make them believe that the training program can help them achieve those goals? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To complete them as a professional working person and increase their skills as a manager. - Middle management must explain to them why they are the ones to take the course and not others. Even though it is obvious that their management skills are not sufficient but it is important not to let them feel like the training program is a punishment. - Before and during the training, middle management and the trainers must remind them all the time of the importance of management skills (incl. planning, organizing, directing, and evaluating) in their working life as a manager.
8	Goal setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is it challenging and difficult enough? - Is it still obtainable for the trainees? - How to make sure that those goals will be met? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The trainers and middle management should take into account situations where the trainees may have real problems. They can also improve the motivational factors to keep the employees

			<p>interested.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nevertheless, if goals are set, they must be reached. At the end of the program, the trainees are supposed to possess proper skills in planning, organizing, directing and evaluating. - The trainers should use informal checkpoints such as quizzes and evaluations to let trainees feel successful or enable them to see areas that need improvement to reach the final goal.
9	Behavior modeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do the trainees have a model to look up to? - Is the model's behavior desirable and appropriate? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If the managers are trainers themselves, they should act as models for the trainees. - The model should not be an employee who is at the same level as the trainees since that may cause internal conflicts. - A reward system should be used during the program to increase the desired behavior that is wished to reinforce.
10	Meaningfulness of material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are the current materials meaningful and useful enough to the trainees? - Should it be improved? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An overview of the program's content must be given to the trainees at the beginning of the program. - Concepts used in the materials must be familiar to and understood by them using their previous knowledge and skills, given that they have so much varied backgrounds.
11	Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do the trainees have the chance to put in practice what they have been trained? - Are they willing to do so in the first place? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practice sessions should be organized, during which the trainer should observe the trainees and make suggestions to improve their behavior. - The employees should submit their plans in advance; if they use their resources successfully and achieve the goals stated in the

			<p>plan, they should be rewarded. In order for them to do so, they must use all the four essential management skills effectively. That is the best way to put in practice what they have been trained.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A drawback can be that they may feel at some point that they are not able to reach the goals anymore and give up on the whole plan; then the reward would not seem so attractive anymore.
12	Feedback (on the trainees)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the trainer give the trainees feedback on their behavior? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feedback will increase the trainees' motivation and should be given immediately after the trainee's action. - Feedback can be sensitive and requires good communication skills from the trainers.
13	Evaluating the training program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How to evaluate participant reactions? - How to evaluate learning? Have the participants learned the ideas, facts, and processes taught in the training program? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How to evaluate behavior? Have they incorporated learned facts and processes in performing the job? - How to evaluate results? How has the work result improved? Did sales increase? Did mistakes decrease? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To evaluate reactions: The trainees' feelings about important elements of the training program can be assessed using different types of survey (e.g. feedback on the course). - To evaluate learning: Tests can be used to assess on paper the participants' new gained knowledge and skills. - To evaluate behavior: "Focus groups" can be used to monitor the trainees' behavior after the training program. It is important to notice and take into account the difference between those who have been trained and who have not. - To evaluate results: Real work performance shows real results. Performance appraisals with the trainees or surveys with the trainees' subordinates can also be used periodically.

14	Arguments about management training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management training has few practical applications. - The environments where it takes place are often artificial and too different from real life situations. - It is impossible to design courses that cover the entire management field. - Individuals enter management in so many different ways and from such varied backgrounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The company must take into consideration different factors including the participants' gender, age group, level of education, previous experience. These factors are important as they affect the participants' ability to comprehend. - The content of the training program should not be too theoretical and it must be shown to the trainees that what they learn in the course can help them improve their work performance.
15	Sources of training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Should the training program be outsourced or organized by the company? - What are the benefits and the costs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The training must be organized by the company, because of the reasons stated in sub-section 5. - One benefit is that the trainers know enough about the company's business, its working culture and the current situation of the FLMs. Costs are low as the trainers are the company's employees and few to no extra fees need to be paid.
16	Training methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What training methods and media should be used? - Why should those methods and media be used? - How can it help the trainees? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seminars and conferences are used to communicate ideas, policies, or procedures, and to discuss issues which have no set answers or solutions. They help change the participants' attitude about some matters. - Case study gives the trainees realistic experience in identifying and analyzing complex problems. - Behavior modeling involves showing the trainees the right way to do something, letting each of them practice the right way to do it, and giving feedback regarding each trainee's performance.