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Assignment 1: Context Analysis

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Providing a Context for New Hires: A Context and Needs Analysis for New Hire Training at the Conference of State Bank Supervisors

**Introduction**

 The Conference of State Bank Supervisors (CSBS), a non-profit organization that is the leading advocate for the state banking system, has identified a training need for new hires. Based on feedback gathered from previous new hires that have completed the company’s “onboarding” program, there is an overall lack of understanding about the financial services industry and the role that CSBS plays in helping state government regulate them. By developing an online course designed to provide new hires with a background knowledge of the state banking system, the financial services industry and its regulation, and CSBS as an organization, it will reduce the amount of time it takes them to perform their new jobs at full capacity.

**Organizational Context**

 CSBS is a non-profit organization consisting of just over 100 employees that is headquartered in Washington, DC. Its mission is to help protect consumers by fostering innovative state regulation and supervision of the financial services industry. It provides legislative, regulatory, and professional development services for all 61 state banking agencies. The mission statement for the CSBS Board of Directors is to bring “all state banking departments together to present a unified voice in Washington. Through CSBS, state bank regulatory agencies continue to champion a system that offers competitive chartering options and efficient and effective – and local – supervision.” Learners within the company are college-educated and typically have experience in other industries, including: legal, policy, communications, data analysis, or software development. Since the students for this particular program will be new hires that lack prior experience in the financial industry, specific instruction will be needed to provide them with the background knowledge, vocabulary, and context required to effectively perform their job responsibilities.

**Problem Analysis**

Morrison (2007) indicates that in order to determine what is included in a training program, an instructional designer must first identify the performance problem. Perhaps the root of CSBS’ problem is that it has been rapidly growing, especially over the past seven years. Events like the mortgage crisis and legislation like the Dodd-Frank and SAFE Act of 2008 have required the company to recently hire its 100th employee, growing from only 26 employees in 2008. Regulation of the financial service industry has become a primary concern of both consumers and legislators, and with new challenges like virtual currencies and online money transfer businesses popping up all the time, the company is expanding quickly. The organization often hires people with very specific job skills (technical writers, web developers, legal staff, etc.) that do not have a background in financial services or regulation. Currently, CSBS does not have a training program in place to address these gaps in essential knowledge for new employees. New hires typically learn about the financial service industry, its regulatory bodies, and CSBS’ responsibilities through on-the-job experiences or independent research.

New employees that do not understand the state banking system, the financial services industry and its regulation, and CSBS as an organization fail to fully embrace their new role in the company. For example, a new hire for the CSBS communications department can only initially contribute by providing linguistic support: checking for grammar, watching for spelling errors, and ensuring the tone is correct. It isn’t until much later that he or she can be relied upon to check facts within a communication, or ensure that the information included is appropriate for the intended audience.

Many new hires report that a complete understanding of the industry and the context into which CSBS fits is not gained until a year or more of being with the company. There is an overall lack of prior knowledge because new hires are not required to have experience in financial services or regulation; there is a high demand for employees with specialized technical skills. So new hires are well-equipped to take on their day-to-day responsibilities, but are not ready to provide critical or analytical support to the organization until much later.

A learning solution is the best option because of the amount of information that needs to be synthesized in order to fully understand the industry, its regulation, and CSBS as an organization. Until recently, the company has been small enough that new hires could be individually coached through the process by their supervisors; however, as the company grows, there are more divisions and affiliates, making CSBS and its mission more complex. Also, the industry and the rules surrounding its regulation are constantly expanding, so having a solid foundation is key.

If a training program is not implemented, more new hires will come into the organization without the subject knowledge needed to analyze the industry, its regulation, and CSBS’ role, the company will lack the knowledge base needed in order to provide the support and guidance it offers to its members. It will take new hires longer and longer to gain an understanding of the company’s context and role, making it harder for them to make critical decisions and provide meaningful contributions to projects.

**Audience Analysis**

As indicated above, the learners will be new hires to the company. They are all college-educated and computer savvy professionals. Entry-level skills include: prior experience with synchronous and asynchronous online communication, advanced analytical and English language skills, and an understanding of each individual learner’s job description and responsibilities. Because of these factors, little time will need to be focused on orienting learners to the LMS and online learning practices. Learners would be able to complete the course during work hours as it will be a part of the Human Resources employee onboarding program, so what Rovai (2003) has termed as “external factors” should not be an issue.

One can also assume that learners will have a very limited understanding of the subject matter before taking the course. Prior knowledge on the financial service industry, its regulation, and CSBS as an organization will be minimal. Completion of the course would be relevant to their jobs because they will come away with a greater understanding of the company as a whole, its role in the financial services regulation sector, and a common vocabulary that will help them to better communicate with their colleagues.

**Course Overview**

The course that will be developed is a 4-week program, hosted through CSBS’ own learning management system. The course topics would be the state banking system, the financial services industry and its regulation, and CSBS as an organization. The expected results on performance will be that new hires will be able to more quickly critically and effectively engage in their roles within the company. By quickly acclimating new hires to the concepts of the financial services industry, state regulation, and CSBS as an organization, they will be able to contribute to the development of legislative, regulatory, and supervisory solutions.

As Stavredes and Herder (2013) point out, an online learning solution is best in this instance because it will “allow learners to enables learners to pursue their educational goals while balancing a number of roles and responsibilities in their lives” (Kindle Locations 640-641). The new hires in the program will still be expected to perform their daily tasks, and an online classroom will allow them to communicate with their peers and the instructor in an asynchronous fashion, when their schedule allows. An online learning solution will also help Human Resources to handle the logistics of coordination, reporting, and tracking, since everything will be managed through the learning management system.

**Goals and Objectives**

It is important to be clear about the learning outcomes that are expected from a new learning program before going into the design and development phases. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (2001) defines learning outcomes as “the knowledge, skills, and abilities that a learner has attained at the end (or as a result of) his or her engagement in a particular set of higher education experiences” (p. 14). By the end of the course, the learning outcomes are for new hires to be able to:

* Describe the history and rationale behind the dal banking system.
* Explain the difference between a state and federal bank.
* Identify the different jurisdictions for state and federal financial regulatory agencies.
* Explain the difference between a depository and non-depository financial institution.
* Define the major non-banking financial services industries: mortgage, money services, consumer finance, and debt.
* Explain the relationship between regulators and industry.
* Describe the history of CSBS and identify its mission and strategic objectives.
* Explain how CSBS supports and serves the state bank regulators.
* Identify the key divisions and affiliates of CSBS and their roles and responsibilities.

**Delivery and Media Analysis**

Each day, learners would participate in an eLearning lesson developed using a SCORM-compliant authoring tool. The lessons will consist primarily of readings, recorded presentations, videos, and audio recordings that are relevant to the course topics. Each lesson will include a formative assessment that will ensure learners have understood that day’s content. These formative assessments will come in a variety of formats, depending on the content that has been covered. Formative assessments will include: online quizzes, discussion forums, or short written assignments. A representative from Human Resources would serve as the primary instructor, and each new hire’s supervisor would serve an administrative role, providing feedback on formative assessments. The summative assessment for the course will be a brief written test and an “exit interview” with guided questions for the interviewer.

**Conclusion**

CSBS is a non-profit organization that provides legislative, regulatory, and professional development services to state back supervisory agencies in the United States. As the organization grows at a rapid rate, there is learning problem where many new hires lack the prior knowledge of the financial service industry, its regulation, and CSBS’ mission and strategic objectives. By developing an online program where new hires would gain the background knowledge they are lacking, they would be able expedite the time it takes them to perform their jobs at full capacity.

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