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ABSTRACT
        This packet contains a series of five brochures that
discuss workplace literacy program development. Each brochure deals
with a specific aspect of such programs and reflects the expertise of
several successful program developers and instructors. The brochures
cover the following topics: (1) gaining management support; (2)
working with management and unions; (3) discussing training needs;
(4) recruiting students; and (5) planning ahead. The brochures follow
a question-and-answer format and provide specific suggestions for the
various aspects of setting up a workplace literacy program. (KC)

DEVELOPING WORKPLACE LITERACY PROGRAMS

NATIONAL CENTER ON ADULT LITERACY

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DEVELOPING WORKPLACE LITERACY PROGRAMS

This brochure is one of a series discussing workplace literacy programs. Each brochure deals with a specific aspect of these programs and reflects the expertise of several successful program developers and instructors.

Gaining Management Support

Trainers and educational coordinators developing workplace literacy programs must confront several initial questions. Among these are:

- How do I gain management support for developing a customized workplace literacy program?

- What are good internal and external sources of funding the program?

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How Can I gain Management Support for Customized Workplace Literacy Training?

Relate the workplace literacy program to overall company goals. For instance, an employer trying to increase quality throughout a plant is likely to have a general training program already in place. However, it is also likely that some workers (i.e. ESL learners or low to middle level literates) may not be able to benefit from this training. Custom designing literacy programs to meet the specific training needs of employees can help achieve the goals of the company.

Have several varieties of introductory presentations ready. Gear presentations to specific problems the company/ department is facing. For example, if you are called in by a production department, they are likely to be concerned about quality issues. Whereas, if your contact is in the personnel department, an important issue is likely to be the quality of the recruits. Training departments will be concerned with the number of people who can not succeed at the training they are being given.

Be able to address all real concerns. A video tape showing how your customized program will address specific needs could be a powerful tool.

Uncover Hidden Costs of Low Literacy
Know what problems (pain) the company is facing.

•Find out how much scrap and rework are costing

•Check if employees need retraining frequently

•Determine how many employees have to be aided with paperwork.

•Investigate how many accidents, emergency room trips and accident related absences have stemmed from employee inability to read warning labels or to follow directions at work.

As you identify the causes and costs of the problems, more people in the organization will be able to see the need for custom designed workplace literacy training, directed at the real problems, and will support your program.

You Should Design Training that is:

•applicable to the job:

Custom design workplace literacy training so employees learn things in class that the they do everyday on the job. For instance, employees who need to ask questions should have opportunities in class to practice question asking. This strategy addresses the problem of relevance and makes it possible for learners to practice needed skills in class and demonstrate to management and supervision the effectiveness of the training on an ongoing basis.

•valuable to management

Make supervisors feel that your program is worth the time and money by devoting class time to job improvement training.

Check with supervisors and the joint advisory teams regularly to see if the original needs are being addressed and to see if your training is having an impact.

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What Are Good Sources of Funding?

•Internal:

During periods of light production, training is an alternative to slowdowns in production.

Custom designed programs can cut the hidden quality deficit costs. The money saved on reworking, retraining, and accidents can more than pays for a literacy program

•External:

Some executives are concerned that workplace literacy programs will cost their companies too much money. To diminish their initial doubts, have ready current and specific information about sources of supplementary funding and/or literacy trainers, such as:

•Local libraries, colleges and literacy organizations

•State level grants

•Federal literacy grants

For national and state literacy grant information, contact the U.S. Department

of Education and your state department of Adult or Vocational Education.

Keep in mind:
•outside funds may need 100% employer match

•federal funding is usually seed money to <u>start</u> programs, and

•there may be some delay in obtaining funds.

Unions also offer viable funding sources because many unions recognize that technology is driving jobs and promotions,that seniority is no longer sufficient job protection. Larger unions are working to be models of educational providers to their membership. Smaller unions and locals are more likely to work for joint survival by having matching funds with management for . educational purposes.

Use your advisory team to explore the union funding possibilities.

Whatever funding path the company takes, make sure you work with the person in direct budgetary control from start to finish.

Related Observations

Having a dedicated fully trained in-house person to work with the advisory team is a good idea. This person should have ready access to supervisors and the advisory team. The availability of electronic mail or other immediate communication system is a valuable tool.
Placing such liasons in a highly visible office accessible to supervisors and instructors is desirable. Keeping the liasons informed of both supervisor needs and what the training will provide is essential.

Companies need to know your training emphasizes; recognizes and will accommodate their needs-specifically and directly.

You need to train your instructors to be flexible as to training methodology without sacrificing the original goals.

Finally:
**WHAT CAN I DO TO
IMPROVE THE LIKELIHOOD
OF SUCCESS OF PROGRAM
ESTABLISHMENT?**

• Compile a list of
  satisfied clients. As
  you build a history of
  successes call on
  satisfied clients for
  endorsements.

• Create a positive,
  actively involved
  relationship with both
  union and management

• Meet regularly with a
  joint union and
  management advisory team

• Focus on the real needs
  of the company.

• Train teachers to
  understand and to be
  able to instruct in the
  workplace atmosphere.

DEVELOPING WORKPLACE LITERACY PROGRAMS

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Working with Management and Unions

Trainers and educational coordinators developing workplace literacy programs must confront several initial questions. Among these are:

*What are good ways to involve union leadership in the development of literacy programs?

*How can training and productivity needs be balanced?

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What are some good ways to work with unions?

Like management, unions have goals. Some of these overlap management goals and some relate to other more general worker concerns. Find out about these goals by interviewing union leaders and getting their feedback on program plans. Secure cooperation from top leaders as well as plant and department level representatives. And, of course, consult contract rules. Ways to get unions involved in your program are:

- Ask them to help recruit students.

- Involve them in joint programs.

- Ask them to use their union halls for classes.

- Have an advisory team that includes both union and management

- Find out if the union has identified any specific needs and ask the union to suggest courses based on these needs.

- Negotiate with the union for potential funding.

Make sure you always consult with the union about decisions. Never assume that you know what the union's needs are. Use your advisory team.

How can training and productivity needs be balanced?

Adjust training to fit into company schedules:

For the workday
- Classes before and after work are appealing to management.

- If you have classes for employees during work, a good time is at the beginning or end of a shift.

- Offer some open-entry, open-exit, drop-in training.

- Develop take-home modules

- Consider some computer-guided instruction to allow for easy make-up.

For the year
- Start courses when the company has its slower periods

- If a company is retooling this may be a good time to train workers who are displaced from their department(s).

- It's a good idea to keep classes short so supervisors are able to plan for employee absences.

For each department
- Choose courses that cut across departments to minimize production loss in any one department.

- OR, put whole departments in training if the company is temporarily closing one line.

Which of these ideas are most useful will depend on the workplace. Thus, consider the type of industry and talk with management, supervisors, teachers and union officials before developing a training schedule.

Find an in-house liaison person to work with supervisors and managers

It's a good idea to have a dedicated, fully-trained, in-house person in charge of the program to assure open lines of communication between literacy trainers and supervisors. This person should:

- be in a highly-visible office

- have rapid access to all supervisors, union representatives, the advisory team, instructors and involved management.

- have access to facilities for electronic mail or other rapid communication

- know by name all supervisors and managers who are involved in the literacy program

- be aware of all training in progress and planned.

Build a broad based foundation of support

In order to capture and retain the support of supervisors and managers, they need to see results from your program.

Be clear about program goals and then make sure the goals are achieved.

Supervisors, managers and unions want to, and should feel a part of the positive results of training. It's a good idea to constantly review progress of employees with supervisors, hold recognition ceremonies, rewarding both employee and supervisor.

Listen to managers' concerns, and include them in all the logistical considerations of the training.

Keep records of employee absences- dates, causes and information missed. Use these records in later conferences with the advisory team, or with management

Make people feel involved and they will be!

Related Observations

• Show the company how the cost of training can be regained in more productive employees, less waste and fewer accidents.

• Companies need to know that your instructors know how to work in the company environment.

• Train instructors in how to be flexible in their teaching strategies without sacrificing the original goals.

• The difference between being a change advocate and a change agent may be the level of management you are dealing with. Work with an appropriate level of management, one that can give you the authority and support you need

Finally:
**WHAT CAN I DO TO
IMPROVE THE LIKELIHOOD
OF SUCCESS FOR PROGRAM
CONTINUATION?**

*Be aware of multiple
 funding sources.

*Be clear as to what is
 wanted and what is
 possible. Achieve goals
 you commit to thereby
 creating successes and
 satisfied clients!

*Create a positive,
 actively involved
 relationship with both
 union and management

*Focus on the real needs
 of the company without
 losing sight of union
 goals.

*Train teachers to be
 able to instruct in the
 workplace atmosphere.

This brochure was developed
with the assistance and advice
of the following workplace
literacy program providers:

Denise Henard   Dan O'Connell
Tess Reinhard   Jorie Philippi
Linda Mrowicki David Mathes

Developed by:
Workplace Literacy
Impact Team
Larry Mikulecky, Director

WPL #2-Working with Management
        and Unions

DEVELOPING
WORKPLACE LITERACY
PROGRAMS

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Discussing Training Needs

Trainers and educational coordinators developing workplace literacy programs must confront several initial questions. Among these are:

- What training is needed at this site?

- How do I decide who receives training?

- How should I address the needs of ESL learners and other special groups?

- How much time is needed for training?

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WHAT TRAINING IS NEEDED AT THIS SITE?

If you listen carefully you will hear both employees and management say what problems are causing the company pain. The **areas of pain** are where the training needs to focus.

The concerns might include blue print reading, interpreting written orders, technical math, customer relations, ability to apply complex rules and procedures or any number of other company specific problems. Given the wide range of abilities in the workforce, this usually means **integrating basic skills** with technical training.

Your goal is to create the classes that address the actual reeds of the employee and employer. You should:

- Use job related examples.

- Teach the specific skills needed.

- Help the employee and employer to see success.

- Hire teachers with a wide variety of skills to help meet the differing needs.

- Hire teachers that understand and can focus on the goals to be met.

- Address the training needs of special populations.

HOW DO I DECIDE WHO RECEIVES TRAINING?

Ideally, the decision about who receives training should be a **joint decision**. It is best made by representatives from management, employees, instructors and other key partners. The needs and concerns of each of these groups must be coordinated. Creating an **advisory committee** made up of representatives from key groups in the workplace will help you decide how to start and with whom. However, as with any ideal you will probably find variations. One or more groups will have special needs. **Be flexible**.

A true advisory committee can open doors of opportunity and information for you.

Because today's businesses are required to change continually in order to compete, training is **no longer a luxury**. Training may address skills in oral and written communication, how to function in groups, as well as the literacy, computation and graph reading required for Statistical Process Control.

Much training is funded by the workers themselves, as a contract benefit. So employees' personal and long term goals should be part of the training mix. Some workplace literacy programs support employees interested in helping their children and even in changing their careers.

The key is to tailor your teaching to the real needs.

HOW SHOULD I ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF ESL LEARNERS AND OTHER SPECIAL GROUPS?

Very Low Level Literates

One of the common myths about workplace literacy programs is that all the students are functioning at very low levels. This just isn't the case. **Less than 3%** of adults read at or **below a second grade level**. If testing reveals a significant number of adult very low literates in your workplace, however, you will need to decide if you can help them or need to refer them to other programs.

To improve, for this group, takes several hundred hours of practice and often one-on-one tutoring. For some severely learning disabled adults, comprehending a manual or a newspaper may simply never

be attainable. Working with **local literacy providers** or setting up a **peer tutoring service** in the workplace can provide an opportunity for you to find out who of this group can be helped.

Low Level Literates

Others in the workplace may have low literacy abilities, but be more capable than the stereotype of an illiterate unable to read a beginning children's book. Some adults can work their way through simple sentences but are not prepared to handle extended written instruction, manuals, or new training material. This group can make fairly rapid gains in a hundred hours or so if training is focused and effective.

To help these people:

• Look at what the students really 'need to know' for the job. Teaching material that is 'nice to know' adds training time and frustration.

• Be particularly flexible and creative in the range of methods your teachers use. These students were unable to profit from traditional school methods.

• Provide these students with

materials they can keep so that they can refer back to instruction and notes.

- Focus on 'How' not 'Why' of the skills.

- Have a definite scope and sequence to all training.

- Create many short term visible goals.

ESL Learners

Increasingly, many of the people entering the workplace are not native speakers of English. These people can be very good workers if their training needs are met. Most of the suggestions made for low level literates are applicable to the ESL learners. In addition you should:

- If possible, go out on the floor and determine from supervisors and from personal observation what are the actual language needs. Find out if the top need is help with oral or print communication.

- Provide these classes with texts and workbooks, so they have something to take home for further practice.

- Be aware that some of the students have not had the benefit of a great deal of education in either first or second language.

HOW MUCH TIME IS NEEDED FOR TRAINING?

You'll find that there are no "magic pills" in terms of literacy and that the time needed varies greatly. Factors like the level of the students entering the training, the complexity of the material being taught, and the speed at which the students are able to learn all affect the amount of time needed.

One form of training is the "fast warm-up." The students have already learned the material and simply need a refresher to be able to apply the skill - often accomplished in 24 hours or less of training.

Students usually gain simple math skills quickly. It has been estimated to take approximately 50 hours to teach graphs, charts, fractions and decimals.

Few employers can afford to send employees to training for 300-400 hours at a time. Most elect to make training more manageable through a variety of techniques.

These include:

•Using materials from the
workplace or the learners'
home-life so that practice
time is increased through
reading at home and on the
job.

•Choosing topics of some
immediacy (i.e. preparing
for a new job task, or a
new job certificate, etc)
so workers will be
motivated to work at home.

•Planning for training to
start immediately during
slow or down times.

•Encouraging employees to
work on "homework" during
job slow times.

Getting learners in the
habit of continued learning
and literacy practice is the
best approach for long term
success.

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with the assistance and advice
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Denise Henard   Dan O'Connell
David Mathes   Jorie Philippi
Linda Mrowicki Tess Reinhard

Developed by:
Workplace Literacy
Impact Team
Larry Mikulecky, Director

WPL #3 —Discussing Training Needs

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DEVELOPING
WORKPLACE LITERACY
PROGRAMS

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series discussing workplace
literacy programs.   Each
brochure deals with a specific
aspect of these programs and
reflects the expertise of
several successful program
developers and instructors.

Recruiting   Students

Trainers and educational
coordinators developing
workplace literacy programs
must confront several
recruiting questions. Among
these are:

•What strategies do I use
  to recruit students for my
  programs?

•What incentives can be
  offered to recruit and
  retain participants?

•How do I reach and
  communicate with learners
  in the workplace?

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What Strategies Can I Use to Recruit Students?

How you recruit will vary due to the situation and purpose of the training. Using a variety of recruiting techniques will expand the number of people aware of your program.

Some good ways to recruit include:

- Notices on bulletin boards

- Fliers placed with pay checks

- Banners hung in conspicuous places

- In house video taped commercials, highlighting both the program and the coordinator

- Kick off celebrations that can include former students as speakers

- Video tapes of the kick off meeting can be shown in all departments so all employees have an opportunity to know about the training program

- Printed explanations which relate the training to company requirements

- Availability of a person to regularly answer questions and to counsel employees about classes

- Arrange for regular formal and informal "plugs" from union representatives

- Use creative approaches
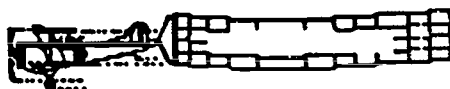
If the company is targeting critical needs for all of its employees, there is likely to be company wide testing. This testing should be followed with personal counseling to help employees select training. Employees often need help in knowing what their test results mean and in what order courses should be taken.

People often need to see "what's in it for me" before they commit their time and energy. For example, a stock room clerk may need to be told that jobs are changing. He, too, must now be able to look up information to answer questions. He represents the company. In other cases, employees need to see workplace literacy as the first step to other courses and future job choices.

Whether recruiting by printed or personal means, the recruiting efforts are often enhanced by the ability to offer incentives.

What Incentives Can Be Offered to Recruit and Retain Participants?

The most effective incentive is paying learners to attend instruction. Many employers pay for all or part of the time learners attend literacy instruction.

When pay for learners is not possible, program providers can still use the following incentives:

- certificates of recognition

- during training refreshment

- end of training luncheons

- congratulatory letters from supervisors, CEOs or union representatives

- lottery type drawings for the people in training with prizes that include cash, meals, goods, and services.

While none of these incentives are costly, they send a message of support from union and management to employees. You should encourage both union and management to offer such incentives.

In addition to these short term incentives there are the very real potentials of helping employees:

- gain sufficient skills to earn promotions

- gain sufficient skills to allow them to seek a new job

- see the value of continuing literacy for themselves and for their children

- or gain enough skills to maintain their current positions

Employees are generally aware of these potential benefits, but they may need help seeing how these intrinsic benefits apply to them.

How Do I Reach and Communicate with Learners in the Workplace?

How you communicate within the workplace will depend on the internal atmosphere of the company. In many companies, going out on the floor and talking to supervisors and employees is very helpful. You meet the people and they are able to get to know you. You can talk with them about actual problems and training needs they see. The more you are

able to act as an ombudsman and encourager with union representatives and supervisors, the more they are likely to share problems, ideas, facilities and opportunities with you.

However, there are two common problems associated with open recruiting. (1) In some situations people do not want others to know that they are attending classes. (2) Going in to a hard hat area entails physical danger to yourself and the people working there and may not be possible for insurance reasons. In both of these situations it is preferable to have advocates on the floor.

How people react to open discussion of training is largely determined by union/management relationships. Be aware of these relationships

Other communication strategies include:

- Place announcements in the company newspaper. It is very helpful if the article or announcement can be written by people who have taken the training being offered.
- Post notices on the

bulletin boards where employees regularly look for information.

- Use color and eye catching designs in your printed announcements.

- Have a person in the break room or other convenient location at regularly scheduled times to answer questions and talk to workers.

- Communicate directly with supervisors, so that they can share the information with their employees. Often supervisors do not know what is available.

Two additional in house communication techniques that have proven very helpful are:

- Have 2 to 4 hour mini-courses for supervisors so they know exactly what will be taught to and expected of employees. At the end of the mini-course give the supervisor a complete course packet to take home to read.

- Give each student a study packet to take home. Include telephone numbers to call for help. These numbers can be for instructors, peer tutors or "homework hotlines". They enable learners to receive immediate help and keep up with classes.

Finally:
WHAT CAN I DO TO IMPROVE RECRUITMENT OF STUDENTS TO MY PROGRAM?

•Create a positive, actively involved relationship with both union and management.The more you positively interact with the supervisors and employees the more "advertisers" you have communicating about your program.

•Be sure that your training meets the needs of both company and learners.

•Become involved and concerned with the long term interests of both employees and company.

•Be persistent. Some strategies take time.

This brochure was developed with the assistance and advice of the following workplace literacy program providers:

Denise Henard	Dan O'Connell
David Mathes	Jorie Philippi
Linda Mrowicki	Wilma Sheffer

Developed by:
Workplace Literacy
Impact Team
Larry Mikulecky, Director

WPL #4-Recruiting Students

DEVELOPING WORKPLACE LITERACY PROGRAMS

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Planning Ahead

Trainers and educational coordinators developing workplace literacy programs must confront several initial questions. Among these are:

•What resources in the workplace can I use?

•What are useful linkages with other organizations?

•What problems should I anticipate and how do I deal with them?

•What kinds of non-training solutions should I offer?

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What Resources in the Workplace Can I Use?

Often the difference between a smooth running training program and constant small irritations is access to a variety of resources.

Some ideas for resources include:

- Talk to the company's training department. Find out what supplies and what trainers they have. You will often be able to negotiate for their help.

- Discuss in detail the facilities you will have to work in - it is very helpful to be able to stay in one area and not have your class locations shifted around.

- Arrange for some form of secure location or storage space so that supplies are not borrowed by other departments - it is easy to forget to return portable items like flip charts.

- Maintain relationships with the training departments of companies you work with and call on them for ideas for solving problems that come up.

- Having your own office space and telephone is very valuable - you gain needed identity and easy recognizability.

- If the company you are working with has an advertising department, talk to them about designing advertisements for the company newspaper.

- Use the company newspaper or newsletter as a place to have students insert articles about training or tips about communicating in the workplace.

- Discussion with the proper company and union officials can result in liaisons and loaned time from organizational people.

- When possible build a consortium of unions - so financial resources and training opportunities can be maximized.

What are useful linkages with other organizations?

- Know what colleges, technical schools and GED programs are in the area. Sometimes the student needs something other than what your program is intended to address.

- Have a knowledge of the social programs available in your area - occasionally the student's go beyond educational

- Clear all social programs with the company - they may know about the agency's appropriateness and they may have insurance/funding arrangements with these agencies. The company may offer the same services through its counseling department.

- Be aware of child care, care for aged and other services that might be needed to free employees to attend class.

- Establish an "educational fair" where you and the company invite local education providers to set up a display and talk to the employees. Know the track records of the providers you invite. Do students usually finish their programs in a reasonable length of time, do they have reasonable fees, are their instructors qualified? Arrange for employees to have some release time given for them to talk with these providers.

- Federal Economic Development money is geared towards company growth.

Show the company how literacy skills are tied to development and work with the company to apply for these funds.

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What Problems Should I Anticipate and How Do I Deal with Them?

The problems of starting a workplace literacy training program are usually fairly predictable and have solutions. Often these solutions can be in place before the need arises.

Some of these common problem / solutions are:

- Production supervisors have many short range goals to be met and tension arises when students need to be in class and a "hot order" has to be completed. The solution for this problem revolves around having the supervisors "buying into" the long range goals of training and scheduling classes at times when production is most likely to be slower.

- Scheduling classes should include discussions with and decisions from your advisory panel as to: **Priority classes** - which classes will be taught

first. **Number** of classes a person can take each time. **Number of people** in each class (base your request on what is being taught and your instructional design). **Waiting lists** and open or closed entry classes should also be discussed.

• Confidentiality is a major concern to students taking the classes. They need to know from the very start that their records will not be shared with management, union or others.

• Management can ask you about the progress of the class as a whole and is entitled to be given this information. The management is also entitled to know if an employee is taking or has taken a particular class.

• Labor/management issues include possible strikes from either teacher unions or the company unions. You do not want to ask either side to cross a picket line.

• Know the policy and relationship between union and management so that you will know whether to go out onto the floor for information or remain in the classroom.

• Be very clear from the

beginning as to whether the training is an employee benefit or a management tool. If learners feel deceived it will seriously injure your program.

• Using the word literacy in the title of your program often gives the impression of very remedial work. Using a catchy title or logo avoids the problem. (Examples include: "Skills Today for Achievement Tomorrow (STAT)" for Blue Cross and "The Pepsi Challenge" for Pepsi.)

What Kinds Of Non-Training Solutions Should I Offer?

When a company asks you to design a training program you may believe that other solutions are more relevant to the company's problem.

Some of these other solutions include:

• Redesigning problem forms.

• Writing clearer instructions for forms.

• Developing appropriate job aids.

• Doing detailed task analyses to see if jobs are properly designed.

However, be sure you are clear on what you were hired to do before you start

making recommendations. Does the company want you to make suggest changes? Look at the entire situation and build the relationship necessary to be able to make recommendations.

Non-training suggestions are definitely situational.

Finally:
What Can I Do To Develop My Program Effectively?

• Ask many people and groups for help and information.

• Be aware of social and educational agencies available in the area.

• Anticipate and plan for problems. Build in redundancy

• Become very familiar with the entire company and its problems.

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WPL #5 Planning Ahead