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Metra Operations Management Development Program: 2010 - 2015

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DISCLAIMER

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TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Title

Metra Operations Management Development Program: 2010 - 2015

Introduction

On behalf of the Urban Transportation Center, the UIC Great Cities Institute (GCI) provided curriculum development and training services to Metra for a workforce education program targeted to new and experienced managers. Kate Pravera, Ph.D., director of professional education at GCI, served as principal investigator. She was approached about the project due to her extensive background designing professional development programs for nonprofit professionals. Pravera was founding director of the UIC Certificate in Nonprofit Program. She previously held several nonprofit management and executive positions and earned her doctorate from Northwestern University.

Description of Activities

Metra's project goal was to increase the management capacity of key staff during a very significant leadership transition. To launch the project, Metra's workforce education staff proposed a draft program plan called "Management Pro 4". They requested assistance as follows:

- Confirm topics and learning objectives for all training sessions.
- Conduct field visits at Metra work sites and interview employees to solicit case material for learning activities.
- Develop customized course activities and assignments utilizing Metra's instructional templates.
- Create instructor/user presentation materials utilizing Metra's instructional templates.
- Develop assessment instruments to measure learner competencies.

Outcomes

The overall project would have two phases. The first phase centered on a basic curriculum while the second phase would provide an advanced curriculum targeted to experienced managers. Each part was to include a series of workshops, typically once a month for up to twelve months. Once the project began, Metra HR staff determined that full-day workshops could not fit in to employees' schedules, so the time allotted was reduced to a half-day format.

Conclusions/Recommendations

Metra's workforce education department developed the preliminary training materials. Working closely with that team, GCI's Kate Pravera provided instructional design and consultation services to ensure maximum learning outcomes. This involved reviewing Metra's training content to ensure that best practices and basic principles of adult learning were in place. The training content was essentially rewritten in a pre-approved format to incorporate participatory learning activities geared to the Metra context, such as small group discussion, case studies, etc.

Sample topics included:

- Recognizing and rewarding performance
- Solving problems and thinking clearly
- Practicing advanced leadership skills
- Mentoring and coaching employees
- Running effective meetings
- Presenting critical information
- Creating effective teams.

It is important to note that all services provided were customized to the Metra context. That meant lifting up Metra's core values across the training and engaging employees through a learning experience that referenced their day to day workplace setting. Materials for each session included PowerPoint presentations and an evaluation document tied to that session's learning objectives.

Publications/Examples

The project was satisfactorily completed in early 2015. At that time Metra did not desire a final report on the project. They considered the rewritten curriculum to be the final outcome and representation of work completed.

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Other Faculty and Students Involved

None

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