Developing and Managing a Large Scale Training Program at a GLP Facility

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1 Introduction

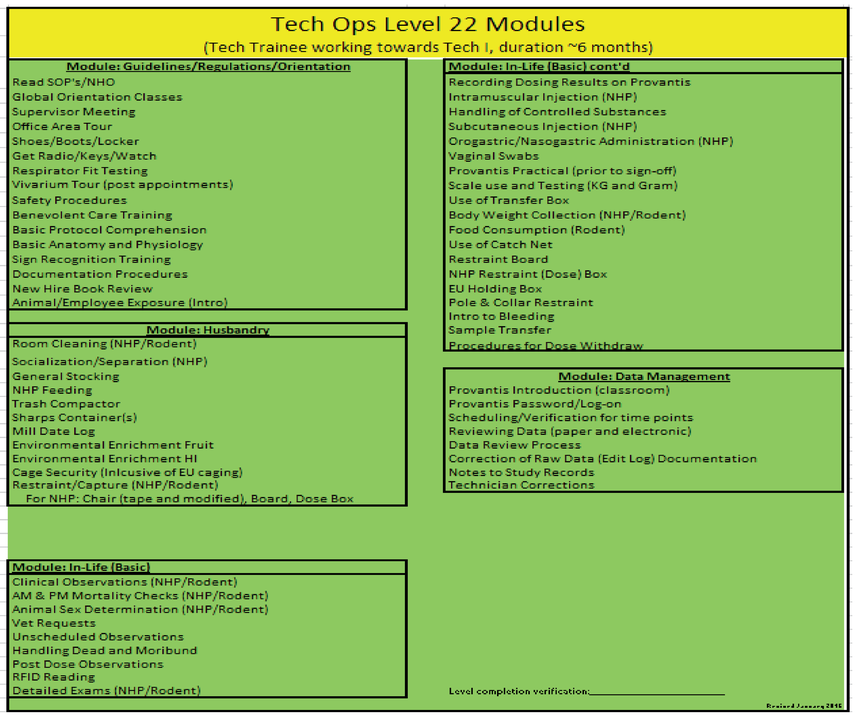
The Technical Training Department (TTD) at Charles River Nevada is the primary resource for all new employee training that occurs with animal care or study support responsibilities. During a recent hiring increase, the TTD was tasked with developing standardized training programs for husbandry and research staff that would create fully trained technicians in a shorter amount of time. This posed some difficulties due to the volume of trainees, the number of skills needed to become a fully trained technician, and the ratio of trainers to trainees. Our facility also houses 3 species of animals, and staff need to be competent working with all of them. While creating this program, careful attention had to be paid to make sure animal welfare, human safety, and the scientific needs were not compromised during training. It was also important to ensure the trainees were engaged and supported to encourage retention. In collaboration with departmental management, the TTD determined the maximum amount of time the training would take and what skills each technician would need within that timeframe to be able to contribute to the workload. In an effort to reduce the trainer to trainee ratio, we then looked at a way to maximize training opportunities by using mentors and highly skilled technicians to assist the TTD. In doing this, we established a standardized training program, improved communication and morale between departments, created opportunities for career development, and developed a timeline to produce a highly trained employee with more than 80 skills. This has benefits not only for staff, but also for the animals in our care and the important scientific research we conduct.

2 Problem

In 2016, Charles River Nevada (CRL-NV) experienced significant growth. This resulted in the hiring of 37 new research technicians within a 12 month period. The TTD faced a challenge to accommodate this high number of trainees as there were only 5 full time trainers and a high volume of work. Initially, all new hires were trained on an average of 70 skills mainly focusing on non-human primates with some rodents/canines. The average amount of time a trainee spent in the training program was 8.5 months with the lowest being 4.25 months (a transfer from the animal care department) and the highest being 14.25 months. There were also challenges within the training timeline due to individual research teams needing specialized species skills. Each team the TTD supported needed an individualized training program. This made it very challenging to keep track of the progress of 37 individuals and what skills/species they were trained on or still needed since it was so inconsistent. Retention was another issue that needed to be addressed. Trainees were not eligible for their first promotion until one year of employment, which often led them to look outside the departments for growth opportunities. If/when trainees left the training program to pursue other opportunities, it created a cyclic problem requiring new staff to be hired and trained.

To address these issues, a special team was created to look at 1) the overall training program and try to find areas for improvement and increase efficiency 2) identify and define all the skills new employees needed regardless of team assignment 3) improve retention

Technical Training Department (TTD) – Training Team	
Problem	Solution
• High number of trainees with only 5 full time trainers	• Created Training/Mentor Team: expanded number of trainers in pool and created growth opportunity within department
• Shifting priorities for required skill sets	• Identified a set list of skills sets needed by all new employees
• Lengthy training timeline with little eligibility for promotion	• Most trainees complete training timeline within 8 months
• Lack of communication between trainers and employee supervisors	• Created standard email template to evaluate trainee performance during training sessions
• Retention: attrition to other depts.	• Employees are eligible for promotion in their department after 6 months



Tech Ops Level 22 Modules

(Tech Trainee working towards Tech I, duration ~6 months)

Module: Guidelines/Regulations/Orientation
- Read SOP's/NHO
- Global Orientation Classes
- Supervisor Meeting
- Office Area Tour
- Shoes/Boots/Locker
- Get Radio/Keys/Watch
- Respirator Fit Testing
- Vivarium Tour (post appointments)
- Safety Procedures
- Benevolent Care Training
- Basic Protocol Comprehension
- Basic Anatomy and Physiology
- Sign Recognition Training
- Documentation Procedures
- New Hire Book Review
- Animal/Employee Exposure (Intro)

Module: Husbandry
- Room Cleaning (NHP/Rodent)
- Socialization/Separation (NHP)
- General Stocking
- NHP Feeding
- Trash Compactor
- Sharps Container(s)
- Mill Date Log
- Environmental Enrichment Fruit
- Environmental Enrichment HI
- Cage Security (Inlcusive of EU caging)
- Restraint/Capture (NHP/Rodent)
  - For NHP: Chair (tape and modified), Board, Dose Box

Module: In-Life (Basic)
- Clinical Observations (NHP/Rodent)
- AM & PM Mortality Checks (NHP/Rodent)
- Animal Sex Determination (NHP/Rodent)
- Vet Requests
- Unscheduled Observations
- Handling Dead and Moribund
- Post Dose Observations
- RFID Reading
- Detailed Exams (NHP/Rodent)

Module: In-Life (Basic) cont'd
- Recording Dosing Results on Provantis
- Intramuscular Injection (NHP)
- Handling of Controlled Substances
- Subcutaneous Injection (NHP)
- Orogastric/Nasogastric Administration (NHP)
- Vaginal Swabs
- Provantis Practical (prior to sign-off)
- Scale use and Testing (KG and Gram)
- Use of Transfer Box
- Body Weight Collection (NHP/Rodent)
- Food Consumption (Rodent)
- Use of Catch Net
- Restraint Board
- NHP Restraint (Dose) Box
- EU Holding Box
- Pole & Collar Restraint
- Intro to Bleeding
- Sample Transfer
- Procedures for Dose Withdraw

Module: Data Management
- Provantis Introduction (classroom)
- Provantis Password/Log-on
- Scheduling/Verification for time points
- Reviewing Data (paper and electronic)
- Data Review Process
- Correction of Raw Data (Edit Log) Documentation
- Notes to Study Records
- Technician Corrections

Level completion verification:_____

3 Solution

Step 1: Define Team
- A team was assembled consisting of Human Resources, Laboratory Animal Medicine Management, Technical Operations Management and Training Management.

Step 2: Evaluate Skill Sets
- Identify new skill sets needed to be able to fully support workload.
- Standardize skills across all supervisors so all employees could work with any species.
- Determine which higher skill sets would be trained later in a collaboration between TTD and respective department.

Step 3: Address Employee Retention and Growth
- The team identified a trend that showed new employees were not receiving their first promotion until 3-9 months after leaving the training program.
- The concern was that staff saw better career opportunities in other departments within the company, so many opted to move.
- The Technical Development Program (TDP) was restructured so that the number of skills and timeframe was decreased for promotion, thus making promotions within the first year of employment achievable.

Step 4: Support for TTD
- The TTD needed to accomplish more training on a daily basis in order to meet new timeline as well as keep up with the high number of trainees.
- A Training/Mentoring team was established utilizing senior staff from research staff department in order to increase training opportunities.
- There was a collaborative effort between TTD scheduling and department scheduling to identify training opportunities and schedule appropriately.

Step 5: Tracking Progress and Communication
- The team created a standard email template that is sent to all trainers, mentors and supervisors at the end of each training session.
- An On the Job (OJT) book was created and each trainee has to bring his/her book to each training session in order to get the trainer's signature. This helped us to track how many sessions they have had on a particular skill.
- A whiteboard with the trainees names and all skills to be trained was created. When trainees receive certification on a skill they go to the board and mark the skill off.

4 Conclusion

As a result of this collaborative effort, the training program now includes a standardized list of 80+ skills, including all species, that can be trained in a 6-9 month period. The TDP was restructured to require certification of 60 skills with eligibility for promotion after 6 months of employment. We have experienced an increase in retention and made it possible for the technicians to have an achievable timeline for growth. The Training/Mentor team has bridged the resource gap between the TTD and the research and husbandry departments. We are able to get more training accomplished in a single day and provide another career path for senior technical staff. The team often meets and discusses challenges and achievements which in turn support the collaborative effort being put forth. Communication between the groups has greatly improved. The email template allows for everyone to be on the same page for each trainee and allows the trainer/mentor to provide a tailored training session based off past performances. The OJT Book provides a history to the trainer and allows them to know how much exposure the trainee has had to this skill. The training white board has been one of the most significant tools developed throughout this project in helping with tracking and scheduling. Having this visual tool immediately available ensures that the correct trainees are getting in the correct training sessions. It has also proven to be a morale booster for the trainees as they take great pride in being able to mark off skills as they get certified and are able to see their progress. Overall, the outcome of the team was better than what we originally anticipated. We were able to meet our goals and improve the training quality for our staff.