

EMPLOYEE TRAINING ISSUES IN THE COSMETIC SERVICES MARKET IN POLAND – THE EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE

Irena DUDZIK-LEWICKA

University of Bielsko-Biala, Department of Marketing and Entrepreneurship; idudzik@ath.bielsko.pl,
ORCID: 0000-0002-3497-8934

Purpose: The aim of this paper is to present the results of a survey of the opinions of employees in beauty salons in Poland on the specifics of the human resources function in their workplace, with particular emphasis on training.

Design/methodology/approach: The paper consists of two parts: theoretical and empirical. The theoretical considerations include a brief review of the literature on employee training and its specifics, while the empirical considerations present the results of own research conducted in 2023 in companies operating in the market of cosmetic services in Poland.

Findings: Based on the analysis of the research material it should be concluded that the training policy in beauty salons in Poland is underdeveloped. Although training is provided in most of the workplaces of the respondents (81%), as many as 50% of them believe that the employer does not care about their development. The survey also shows that up to 70% of the respondents are not informed about the objectives of the training, 88% of the respondents think that the employer does not check their knowledge after the training and 43% of them rate the implemented training policy in the category "neither good nor bad".

Research limitations/implications: The research carried out implies the possibility of widening the subject in the future, as the results obtained, due to the size of the research sample and its selection, allow for broader generalizations, but cannot be conclusive.

Practical implications: The reflections undertaken focus on the presentation of training policy practices and their evaluation, with the identification of 6 conclusions and 6 recommendations that can inspire managers to improve the existing training policy or to create one.

Social implications: Creation of awareness of the nature and specificity of employee training.

Originality/value: The issue of employee training is extremely important in the context of business and human resource development. Particularly in the cosmetics industry, such training can contribute to the improvement of service quality, work efficiency and customer satisfaction. The idea of training is not new, but a review of the literature on the subject confirms the cognitive gap in the presented topic in relation to the cosmetic services market in Poland. Therefore, this study should be of interest to entrepreneurs, managers or all people who manage human resources in cosmetic services companies, but also to academics, as it provides a valuable source of information in the exploration of employee training issues.

Keywords: Employee training, training process, cosmetic services market.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

In a challenging and constantly changing world - the concept of training is applicable in many, if not all, business sectors. The pace of change is forcing employees to constantly upgrade their professional skills, and businesses are keen to invest money in the all-important human capital. Henry Ford said: "take away my factories, my buildings, but leave me my staff and I will build a new company" (Kucia, 2024), while Andrew Carnegie claimed: "you can take my money and my factories away from me, but leave me my salesmen, and in two years I'll get it all back" (Kucia, 2024). The quoted excerpts from the statements are over 100 years old, yet they are still relevant and valid. On the one hand, human resource management (HRM) training and development is important for companies to survive in a competitive environment. On the other hand, the training measures implemented are also crucial for the individual development and career plans of employees.

The turn of the century brought a significant increase in interest in the issue of training and its management in organizations. However, the exponentially growing number of publications in this area is highly diverse, multidimensional and difficult to sort out. The attention paid to the issue of employee training is also reflected in numerous empirical studies illustrating its state of permanent development (e.g. Ada et al., 2023; Aditya, Pio, Rumawas, 2024; Görlitz, 2011; Nai-Wen, Chih-Yun, Yeh-Yun Lin, 2008; Nzimakwe, Utete, 2024; Pauli, 2014; Pérez-Bustamante Ilander et al., 2016; Różanski, 2012). The vast majority of these studies focus on a research sample covering a group of small and medium-sized enterprises without taking into account their industry specificity, or if this specificity is already taken into account it usually covers manufacturing activities in general. In the author's opinion, one feels a certain paucity when reviewing the literature on research devoted strictly to the cosmetic services market. Worldwide trends, such as an increased awareness of a pro-healthy lifestyle and beauty care in society, are conducive to the development of the cosmetic services market in Poland as well (Kryczka, 2011), which is why exploring the issue of employee training may be of interest to today's entrepreneurs, managers or all those who manage human resources in cosmetic service companies. The ever-changing beauty industry and the rapid responses of competitors to change force employees to continuously improve their skills. The beauty services market changes from season to season, with new trends, new techniques, new treatments and many other areas where a competent, well-trained employee is paramount. Investing in employee development equals greater effectiveness of that employee, and as we know - from the company's perspective this means better financial results (Habrzyk, Dudzik-Lewicka, 2023). The research carried out in 2023 and which forms the empirical basis of this study was aimed at investigating training practices in the Polish cosmetic services market. Additionally, they develop a new variable - training intensity - and investigate its impact on the planning, implementation and evaluation of training programs in these companies.

2. Employee training and its specifics - theoretical connotations of the concept

In any organization, the most important subject of operational management is the human being, who can be seen in two dimensions. In the first, he is regarded as the physical performer of tasks in the company, while in the second, as the bearer of competencies. Against the backdrop of dynamic change, the main factors determining the effectiveness and efficiency of operations are the qualifications and competencies of employees. Qualifications refer to the knowledge, skills, motivation, behavior and attitudes of employees towards their work. Competencies, on the other hand, additionally include the personality, styles of action, values and characteristics of the employee, which enable him/her to achieve objectives in line with the objectives of the system, which is the enterprise (Jasiński, 2005; Oleksyn, 2006). The level of employee competence, measured by the usefulness of staff in professional situations, depends primarily on activities related to training in the broadest sense.

What is training? Training is a very complex method of improving qualifications that lies between management, psychology and pedagogy (Laguna, Fortuna, 2011). Unfortunately, there are not many publications in Poland devoted strictly to the subject of training. Analyzing the literature on human resource management, various themes and definitional approaches can be observed. According to Wisniewski, this diversity in interpretation may be due to issues of topical or forward-looking orientation, taking into account different audiences and separating or combining training and improvement (Wisniewski, 2004). However, without entering into an in-depth quibble about the ways in which the concept is defined, it is important to identify the two main definitional streams operating in both domestic and foreign literature (Table 1). Initially, training was understood as apprenticing employees to perform specific tasks. However, this approach has changed over time and training is now seen as a way of developing the potential of employees in the context of business needs.

Analyzing the history associated with the evolution of training, four models of training orientation can be distinguished: the traditional model - which involves adapting the training program to the job in order to make up for employees' shortcomings, this model prefers traditional teaching methods; the developmental model - which uses traditional methods, while training is geared towards innovative outcomes; the informal model, which uses situations and reactions from the environment, e.g. by imitating others; and the innovative model - which supports forms of learning, but the main aim is to develop ever newer concepts and solutions to encourage employees to experiment. In the opinion of A. Andrzejczak, most Polish companies prefer the traditional model. However, a trend has been noticeable for some time now, which is changing the approach to training, to an innovative one (Andrzejczak, 2010).

Table 1.
Selected definitions of training

Author	Definition
First definitional approach - training the employee for specific tasks	
M. Armstrong	Training is a systematic and planned process of modifying and improving employees' knowledge, experience and skills in order to achieve significantly better performance on the job
J.A.F. Stoner, R.E. Freeman, D.R. Gilbert	Training is about teaching technical workers the methods of doing things in the jobs where they do their work - vocational courses
J.W. Rothwell	Training is a short-term activity that is educational in nature and its purpose is to develop in the employee concerned the knowledge and skills necessary for the requirements of the chosen position
A second definitional approach - developing employee potential in the context of business needs	
A. Poczowski	Training is a series of systematic and purposeful activities by an organization to deepen and broaden an employee's potential to meet not only current but also future needs
J. Penc	Training of employees is aimed at both maintaining and increasing the effectiveness of the work currently being carried out, helping them to develop their capabilities, to adapt to new working methods, organizational solutions, but also to adapt to new work content
P. Kopijer	Training is a planned process of changing the way a specific group of employees acts/behaves, built on the basis of filling a - change-related - competence deficit in people's attitudes, knowledge and skills, resulting in identifiable business benefits in the company

Source: own elaboration based on (Armstrong, 2000; Stoner, Freeman, Gilbert, 2011; Rothwell, 2008; Poczowski, 1996; Penc, 2006; Kopijer, 2020).

Employee training in a company follows a well-defined process that has been standardized and systematized over the years. This is because organizing training requires the right preparation and approach. So what needs to be taken into account? The literature provides a number of examples. For example, P. Bramley divides the training process into three stages: 1 - the organizational stage, providing support to the participants before the course, 2 - the educational stage, whose task is to support the participants during the training, 3 - the diffusion stage - giving support to the trainees to make changes in the workplace (Bramley, 2007, quoted after Buś-Bidas, 2016). In turn, following M. Armstrong, the classical training process may consist of 4 stages: 1 - analysis of training needs, 2 - design of a training plan, i.e. determining what type of training will meet the needs, 3 - implementation of the training using professional trainers and training institutions, 4 - evaluation of the training carried out to be sure that it was effective (Armstrong, 2005). A similar approach to the topic is also represented by A. Poczowski (1998), while the model developed by A. D. Kirkpatrick includes as many as ten stages of the training process (Kirkpatrick, 2001, cited in Buś-Bidas, 2016).

However, as T. Kowalski points out, the number of stages is not as important as the awareness of the training cycle in the company itself, which should be characterized by systematicity, continuity, dynamism and participation (Kowalski, 2024). Systematic means planned in such a way that it verifies specific requirements (Armstrong, 2005) and can be grouped into logical manageable stages (Dobrowolski, 2002). By continuity is meant training that is a cyclical activity, constituting a system of continuous training (Poczowski, 1998). The dynamic nature of the training process refers to a group of logically related activities that result from and are coupled with each other, while the participatory nature refers to the

involvement of all parties (management, training institution, lecturers and trainees) in the process of co-creating the training program (Niedzielski, Walkowiak, 2000).

3. The training process and its organization in the assessment of beauty salon employees in Poland

3.1. Characteristics of the research environment

The study, which aimed to provide an insight into the training policy practices implemented by beauty salon operators in Poland, was carried out in 2023 with a quantitative method, using a survey questionnaire as the measurement tool. Employees of beauty salons in Poland were surveyed, and the salons themselves were searched using the Google search engine (after entering the criterion 'beauty salon <name of city>'). The survey questionnaire was developed together with Roksana Habrzyk as part of her own work using the Google Forms platform, and the link to the survey was sent to the mailboxes of beauty salons in Poland, as well as made available via the Internet (Facebook, Instagram, industry portals). The questions included in the survey questionnaire were mostly closed, with only two taking the form of open-ended questions.

The study described in this paper involved 120 respondents - employees of beauty salons in Poland. Sample structure: gender: female - 98.2%, male - 1.8%; age: 18-29 - 30%, 30-44 - 54.2%, 45-59 - 15%, over 60 - 0.8%; education: vocational - 1.7%, secondary - 37%, tertiary - 58%, vocational preparation courses - 2.5%, other - 0.8%; employment: less than 5 people - 62.7%, from 5 to 10 people - 31.4%, over 10 people - 5.9%.

3.2. Selected results of the quantitative survey

The first and second questions of the survey sought to answer the question of whether beauty salon owners engage fully in the human resource management process? As the survey results show, respondents have mixed opinions about the implementation of this process in their workplaces. Which elements of human resource management are well perceived by employees and which need improvement? Respondents gave good marks to the development and motivation measures undertaken (both groups are dominated by the answer 'rather engaged' - 53% and 44% respectively). In the case of selection, respondents do not agree on their preference (48% indicate a response of 'rather engages' and 45% 'rather poorly engages'). In contrast, the area in need of improvement is performance appraisal (here the predominant response is 'rather poorly engaged', with 45% indicating this). As it turns out, training is implemented in the majority of respondents' workplaces (81%), as well as employment is planned based on staffing needs (55%). Other elements of the human resources management

process were assessed negatively by the respondents. 43% of respondents indicate that recruitment is not carried out on the basis of a well-defined profile of the employee to be hired, terms and conditions of employment are not precisely presented (52%) and the employee is not subjected to periodic employee evaluation (55%). Interestingly, quite a lot of indecision emerged when asked whether employees are rewarded. 39% of respondents have no opinion on the subject, while 37.5% of respondents think yes and 23.5% think no.

Employees of beauty salons are aware of the benefits they believe proper human resources management brings to the company. Among the most important are: more opportunities for employee development (62%), the right selection of employees (58%) and increased productivity (55%). What is surprising is that for only 7% of respondents the benefit is building a competitive advantage.

The next block of questions was designed to find out respondents' feelings about whether their employer cares about their development and informs them about the objectives of the training. Respondents have divided opinions on whether their employers care about their development and invest in improving their skills and competencies. 48% of them believe that their employer cares about their development, 50% of respondents have the opposite opinion and 30% of respondents have no opinion on this topic. The survey also shows that as many as 70% of the respondents surveyed are not informed about the objectives of their planned training. These results show that employers should better communicate their employee development activities to ensure a higher level of awareness of the development opportunities available to them. This may also indicate a need for greater investment in employee development in some organizations.

How do respondents rate the different elements of the workplace training process? When analyzing the responses, it is noticeable that most often employees do not have an opinion on this (Table 2). These results suggest that employers may not be implementing the different elements of the training process equally, and this in turn may indicate a need to improve the company's training policy.

When planning the delivery of training, does the employer talk to its employees about their training needs? The opinions of respondents are divided. The answer "rather yes" was chosen by 38% of respondents, "rather no" by 30%, and "definitely yes" and "definitely no" - in both cases - 13% of respondents. The results show that there is some scatter in the responses, which may suggest that some issues may need further clarification or discussion to get clearer answers from respondents.

Respondents have a strong preference for in-company training (85%), and most value the following forms of training: practical classes organized in the company, lectures and demonstrations, and instruction from a person responsible for implementing the skills. The detailed results of the survey are presented in Table 3.

Table 2.*Evaluation of individual elements of the on-the-job training process*

Elements of the training process	Yes (%)	Not (%)	I have no task (%)
Training needs are analyzed (based on employee characteristics and company needs)	46,5	26	27,5
Training is designed and objectives are reviewed	22	34	44
A detailed training program shall be drawn up	55	21	24
Planning the organization of the training in advance (including booking the room, models and tools)	27,5	19	53,5
A project calculation is made based on the adopted budget	22,5	26,5	51
The training is carried out according to a prepared program	41	18	41
Training is assessed by the entrepreneur/manager	21,5	34	44,5
The training is assessed by the trainee	20	49	31

Source: own graphic design based on (Habrzyk, Dudzik-Lewicka, 2023).

Table 3.*Training methods and techniques with their frequency of use*

Training methods and techniques used in the company	Permanently (%)	Very frequently (%)	Often (%)	Sometimes (%)	Never (%)
Experiments	11	4	17,5	30	37,5
Lectures and demonstrations	44	32,5	17,5	5	1
Practical activities	65	20	11	3	1
Training based on case studies	1	1	1,5	14	82,5
Mentoring	1	12,5	21	37,5	28
Coaching	0	1,5	9	43	46,5
Instruction of the person responsible for implementing the skills	37,5	33	20	7	2,5
Trial and error method	0	0	3	17	80
Modeling on colleagues	16	50	24,5	6,5	3

Source: own graphic design based on (Habrzyk, Dudzik-Lewicka, 2023).

The vast majority of respondents are of the opinion that the organized training rather develops their professional skills and competences (55%), however, in the opinion of as many as 88% of the respondents, the employer does not verify their knowledge after the training. Moreover, no detailed analysis is carried out after the implemented training (e.g. what goals were achieved, whether employees require further training, whether the intended effects were achieved) - the dominant options in the responses are "rather not" (48%) and "no" (23%).

What, then, is the respondent's attitude towards the training provided? The majority of surveyed employees of beauty salons in Poland actively participate in training to satisfy their deficiencies and develop their skills (47%). The remaining respondents always take part in all organized training (28%). However, it is worth noting that as many as 20% of respondents only take part in mandatory training and 5% do not engage in any additional training, which may indicate a need for additional support or motivation for these employees.

The evaluation of the training policy at the respondents' workplaces is mixed. As many as 43% rated the training policy in place as 'neither good nor bad' and 32.5% as 'good'. Only 7.5% of respondents rated the training policy as very good. These results may indicate the need to review and possibly modify current training practices to increase employee satisfaction and training effectiveness.

The last question was an open-ended question, where respondents were given the opportunity to write their own answer on what they thought could change in terms of the training policy implemented in their workplace. The results show that there is a strong demand for more and better quality training in the Polish cosmetics industry. Respondents clearly indicate that they would like to see training provided, that it should be provided more often and that it should be more targeted and not haphazard. This valuable information should stimulate employers to work and better adapt their training programs to the needs of their employees.

4. Conclusions and projections for the future

On the basis of the research investigation carried out, the following conclusions can be formulated and the following recommendations can be made to the managers of beauty salons in Poland, which should contribute to the improvement of the implemented training policy or to its creation at all:

Conclusion 1 - employers are not involved in the majority of the company's human resource management processes.

Recommendation 1 - increase the involvement of the employer or managers in human resource management by: clearly defining the profile of the potential employee in terms of their skills, experience and qualifications; clearly indicating the terms and conditions of employment, such as salary, working hours, benefits and promotion opportunities; regular periodic employee appraisals important for monitoring employee progress, identifying areas for improvement as well as helping to identify training needs; rewarding employees more frequently, both financially and non-financially, which can be an effective way to increase employee engagement and motivation.

Conclusion 2 - low level of knowledge of managers about the training process and its specificity in the context of management processes.

Recommendation 2 - improve managers' human resource management skills, with emphasis on the implementation of the training process as a process of continuous learning and adaptation to changing conditions.

Conclusion 3 - relatively low employee evaluation of the level of organization of in-service training projects.

Recommendation 3 - increase employee satisfaction in the above area by: increasing the transparency of training projects in the context of informing stakeholders about the objectives, benefits and stages of the training process, which can help them understand why training is important and how it contributes to their professional development, accelerating employees' involvement in training planning, which will allow them to better understand the process itself and its essence, feedback, i.e. giving them the opportunity to express their opinions on training,

career development, i.e. showing employees how training can help them in their career development, which can directly increase their motivation to participate in development projects.

Conclusion 4 - employers implement the training cycle in a selective manner, do not communicate the objectives of the training, do not plan the demand for training services, do not take into account the needs of both the employee and the company, do not verify the knowledge of the employees before and after the training.

Recommendation 4 - effective training requires commitment from both employees and managers, with an emphasis on the latter, so it seems that their actions should be directed towards: open communication, especially in terms of communication of training objectives, a training demand planning process to understand the training needs of employees on the one hand (this may require e.g. surveys) and on the other hand to ensure that the training provided is in line with the company's business objectives and development strategy, continuous improvement of the training process through pre- and post-training knowledge verification, which will help to understand what knowledge gaps employees have before the training and how effective the training was.

Conclusion 5 - training projects are mostly carried out in-house

Recommendation 5 - it is proposed to diversify activities in terms of preferred forms of training with an emphasis on organizing additional training outside the workplace. This form of training contributes to greater team spirit and tighter bonds between employees and between employee and supervisor.

Conclusion 6 - practical training is often a priority for managers.

Recommendation 6 - when designing training, it is worthwhile to diversify the training methods and techniques used and to focus especially on those that do not generate additional costs. This group includes methods such as coaching, i.e. continuous assistance from an assigned mentor (trainer), and mentoring (training through the acquisition of knowledge from a senior employee). Both methods help employees develop on a personal and professional level and promote a culture of continuous learning within the company.

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