

# JR East's Human Resource Development

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## Introduction

Today's companies face a rapidly changing business environment and the know-how needed by personnel to perform their duties changes almost day-to-day. Consequently, prompt action is needed to keep from falling behind. Without constant review of content and improvement in quality, no company can keep up with modern trends.

In this situation, JR East established its group long-term management plan—JR East 2020 Vision—in April 2008. Under this plan, the company is training personnel to act on their own initiative according to individual situations based on management policies of 'rigorously pursuing safety and customer satisfaction, sustaining growth initiatives for the next era, meeting corporate social responsibilities, and building organizational strength and developing human resources.'

## Education and Training

Immediately after JR East's establishment in 1987, the company formulated its Education and Training Regulations forming the basic policy for education and training. The core of this policy is implementing education and training using worksite education. Seminars, correspondence courses, and outside training are defined as supplementary. Furthermore, the company set down active support for self-development in the regulations with the aim of enhancing the motivation of individual employees, who are the driving force towards the future.

## On-the-Job Training

Dealing with passengers at stations, driving trains, maintaining railway facilities, and other work forming the basis of the company's operations are carried out at front-line worksites. Performing actual duties at the worksite can be an effective form of training and good education is a platform for self-development and systematic and effective on-the-job training (OJT). The business of companies in the JR East group is very diverse. So, rather than using uniform OJT, instruction is implemented according to individual abilities and worksite situation, taking into account the individual's needs.

Furthermore, the company is working to coordinate OJT with seminars for enhanced development—the worksite head checks the skill level of staff to determine whether each staff member qualifies for extra training, and works to raise awareness of training objectives. After-training follow-up makes use of tools such as training records.

## General Staff Training

General staff training to supplement worksite education is held in various locations such as the JR East General Education Center in Shirakawa City and individual branches, as well as general training centres in branch offices. The JR East General Education Center established in April 2000 in Shirakawa City, Fukushima Prefecture, is one of the largest training facilities in Japan with grounds covering 49.3 ha and accommodation for 1224 people. Training for human resource development, for enhancing knowledge and technology skills, and for train crews is done here.

The Accident History Exhibition Hall at the Center is a useful tool in helping personnel visualize past major accidents from videos and other accident-related materials. This gives employees a better understanding of the lessons learned from accidents and countermeasures, fostering safety awareness.

Training centres were established at individual branches to help personnel learn the lessons of the December 1988 train collision at Higashi-Nakano station. The aim is to instil basic knowledge and skills as well as the ability to take action and make quick decisions in a crisis. Education is provided for each step of driving duties for new recruits as well as for periodic skills-update training for experienced station personnel, conductors, and drivers.

Training and practice go beyond classroom education. Facilities are regularly updated and use the latest simulators to realistically mimic the actual worksite because it is important to learn by actually seeing and doing.

## Training for Human Resource Development

Training to develop human resources is performed so that personnel understand the roles each level in the corporation



JR East General Education Center in Shirakawa City

(JR East)



Worn axle at entrance to Accident History Exhibition Hall

(JR East)



Practising on multi-person simulator

(JR East)

should fulfil, deepen their understanding of the company's management policies and objectives, and foster a sense of cooperation. For example, training has been performed since the company's establishment in 1987, including new recruit training, training for employees who have passed promotion examinations, and training for newly appointed personnel.

Other training includes voluntary training to motivate junior staff, such as practical manager development training for junior management-level employees under 40. The training goal is for managers to learn how to take action and

provide leadership to achieve targets and lead the company in the future. The managers also learn to become trusted and respected at the worksite by superiors, colleagues, and subordinates. About 200 applicants are chosen each year from various parts of the organization and the training spans 50 days.

There is also training by correspondence schooling for assistant supervisor-level employees up to 28-years old. Correspondence schooling provides a method for voluntarily improving knowledge with the goal of strengthening weak



Class at JR East Technical Academy

(JR East)



All domestic university students meeting for summer seminar

(JR East)



Small-group activity announcement assembly at head office  
(JR East)

points and understanding is also deepened by repeating the content of the correspondence courses in seminars.

### Training enhancing knowledge and technical skills

The training content is always being reviewed and new training is formulated to drive home the importance of safety and customer satisfaction, which are the basics of our business. Training is also needed to deal with more complex issues such as diversifying customer needs and technology advances. Another important topic is how to transfer the knowledge of veteran personnel as they reach retirement age to younger staff taking over. To master and improve skills required for specialized and high-level duties, training

is organized according to each individual's knowledge and skill level from when he or she first enters the company. For example, the target training period for personnel at facilities and electrical worksites is 7 years, consisting of basic technical training on entering the company, follow-up specialized technical training during the second and third year, practical technical training in the fifth year, followed by expert training to fulfil a leadership role.

The company has also the JR East Technical Academy for developing engineers leading the core technical areas in the future. Twenty-four selected junior staff members are trained for 1 year to master railway fundamentals and theory and learn railway technologies.

## Correspondence courses

The system of internal correspondence courses helps raise employees' motivation for self-development. There are also external correspondence courses for studying more general topics and obtaining qualifications.

The internal correspondence course materials are produced by JR East and are customized to the specific work of the railway industry and the broad range of specialized knowledge involved. Currently, there are 39 courses offering easy-to-read and easy-to-understand information on the latest knowledge and technology. These courses are composed of 4 general courses, 6 marketing courses, 3 safety measures courses, 8 rolling stock courses, 12 equipment courses, 2 business creation courses, and 4 construction courses. They are taken by about 35,000 people annually.

The external correspondence courses are coordinated with outside educational organizations as part of self-development support, providing an opportunity for employees to gain broader knowledge as part of the corporate organization. Currently, 264 courses are offered in subjects such as management and business skills, specialized fields, certificates, languages, and PC/IT classes. The company covers half the course cost at completion to support employee self-development.

## University Study and Other Programmes

JR East implemented a domestic university study programme for junior staff who will lead the company in the future so they can gain broad knowledge. The programme started in 1994 by sending 9 employees to Tokai University and Tokyo Denki University. Chuo University was added in 2004. There have been 214 graduates so far. Currently, 84 employees are enrolled in university study.

The company also has an overseas study programme for sending employees overseas to earn masters degrees at graduate schools in North America and Europe. The purpose is to acquire very specialized knowledge and to further cultural understanding by gaining a broader perspective and skills.

An external seminar for junior staff has been held since FY2006 for personnel who will lead the company in the future. The idea is to broaden their perspectives and motivate them through interaction with employees of other companies. More than 400 people participate in the short intensive seminars hosted by universities and other educational organizations each year.

## Kaizen Activities

So in order for the company to deal better with social changes, a stimulating workplace is needed where personnel are

satisfied while finding and solving problems on their own. JR East is working to strengthen its business structure at the front-line worksite by introducing kaizen activities, such as small-group and proposal activities.

Small-group activities were introduced in 1987 with the goal of making work fulfilling and creating an environment where every employee can use his or her skills to the fullest. More than 35,000 employees participate in about 5300 kaizen circles. Furthermore, assemblies are held at head office, regional branches, and sections to announce and reward achievements made through these activities. Personnel also participate actively in activities such as meetings outside the company.

Proposal activities are where individual employees review day-to-day work to improve service, safety, and work efficiency. They help create a vibrant workplace where personnel improve their skills and engage with management. About 680,000 proposals are received annually, with each employee making an average of 12 proposals.

## Conclusion

For a company to have sustainable growth, each and every employee must have pride and motivation in his or her work. We intend to take active measures to create a system providing more learning opportunities so individual employees can improve their skills, personal growth and work satisfaction. ■



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