THE SMART APPLICANT'S
SANITY-SAVING WORKBOOK
FOR THE 2019 TRAINING TOP 125

Section-By-Section Insights,
Expert Suggestions
And Scoring Guidelines

(all in a handy, fully functional Word document)

SPOT-ON BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS

DEB ARNOLD, ink.

Winning Recognition for Learning Leaders

CONTENTS

Click on any entry below to jump to that section. Links to "Return to Contents" appear throughout the document.

* Qualitatively scored essay(s)
** Includes short written response(s)
*** Sample essay(s) provided
Not enough Return to Contents links for y'all? Copy and paste to your heart's delight. Too many? Simply delete.

About this Document

The **Smart Applicant's Workbook for the Training Top 125** is designed to save you time and headaches, and help you present your learning initiatives in the best possible light. The workbook features:

- **T125 application questions** in a fully functional Word document, unlike the official application, which is "locked" and thus disabled for important functions like Find, Word Count and Spell Check. (FYI, the application is locked to enable it to be machine-read and quantitatively scored.)
- **Section-by-section insights** on how to bring out your learning organization's strengths.
- **Official scoring guidelines**—inserted as relevant, so you can see them in context.
- **Sample essays**, including 2 winning Best Practice Award and 2 winning Outstanding New Training Award examples you can learn from.

Please note:

- This document is formatted differently from the official application to be sure no one accidentally submits the wrong document. The questions are identical, though in some places I added sub-numbering, e.g., 2.15a, 2.15b, etc., to make it easier to keep track.
- Because this is **NOT** the official application (which you can download here), *DO NOT submit it.*
- Highlighted text denotes a change from last year.
- ***VERY, VERY IMPORTANT*** **Compose, compile and edit your responses here. Once you're** *REALLY 100% DONE*, *THEN* **copy them into the official application and submit.**

What you should be looking for:

- My comments are in orange, Arial font.
- Scoring guidelines are in green, Times New Roman font. Some questions are scored both quantitatively and qualitatively; in these cases, the quantitative guidelines will appear first.

Deb Arnold, Ink. is not affiliated with
Training *magazine or the Training Top 125 Award.*

PART TWO: ABOUT YOUR TRAINING ORGANIZATION

If possible, please fill out this application based on the training programs throughout your entire organization. If you must refer to U.S.-based programs only, for example, please note that.

2.0 SUMMARY: Please explain why your organization should be named to the 2019 Training Top 125—what sets it apart from a learning and development perspective. (Word count limit: 300)

Here's your chance to make a GREAT first impression and help the judges understand how you and your team, and L&D at your company, are unique and special. ***Set the right tone.***

DO **NOT**:
- Write something that pretty much any company could write, like, "we offer blended learning."
- Give a laundry list of programs.

DO:
- Show *what sets you apart* from other L&D groups: your key strengths and innovations.
- Emphasize achievement of **corporate strategic goals,** backed up with **key impact metrics**.

Need ideas?
a. With your team, list the "Top 10 Reasons We Are Awesome" *without listing any programs.*
b. Notice which ones make you smile the most.
c. Write about your top-smile awesomeness, using star program examples to back up your points.

Scoring: This question, 2.2 and 2.15 together make up a **three-point "innovation" score**. Emphasize how you innovate, using specific language to that effect ("breakthrough," "unique," etc.).

Note the highlighted text below, which Training added to the scoring description. Level 4 results have always been a part of this score, so one can assume they *really* want you to include it and earn full points.

Innovation of Training Programs and Delivery Methods (Sections 2.0, 2.2, and 2.15) (3 points)
The more innovation (it can be innovation from a training delivery standpoint; innovatively solving a problem/challenge with training; innovation in technology; innovation in training organizational strategy, evaluation method, tracking training, communicating with learners, etc.) backed by Level 4 results, the higher the score should be.
- .5 to 1 for demonstrated innovation in one area (Section 2.2, Section 2.15, or Section 2.0).
- 1.25 to 1.75 for demonstrated innovation in two areas.
- 2 to 2.75 for demonstrated innovation in some categories in each of the three areas.
- 3 for across-the-board demonstrated innovation in all categories in each of the three areas, along with Level 4 results provided to indicate training effectiveness.

BACK TO **CONTENTS**

OUTSTANDING NEW TRAINING INITIATIVE AWARD

In addition to the Best Practice Awards described above, several winners also will receive an OUTSTANDING NEW TRAINING INITIATIVE AWARD. Please note that although these are separate awards, these nominations will factor into the overall qualitative scoring for the Top 125.

To nominate an outstanding initiative for consideration for this award, please describe an outstanding training and development initiative (EXCLUDING the formal programs nominated above for Best Practice Award consideration) **that your organization has undertaken in the last 12 months**. Such an initiative has shown success (please detail results) in one are in short span of time but has not yet been proven over time in multiple scenarios. In time, it may become best practice.

The Outstanding Training Initiative is scored on: Project scope, linkage to a corporate goal, innovation, reinforcement, senior leadership involvement, and Level 3 (behavior change) and Level 4 (business impact) results.

This one can be tricky. The program must be less than 12 months old, but already "shown success."

Follow *the same guidelines* as the Best Practice Award, except metrics should include your early successes and **anticipated** impact: what you *plan* to measure, any defined or estimated goals and, of course, how all this relates to a strategic corporate objective. It's OK to not yet have results, but you must have plan for measuring them.

Choose one with Best Practice potential – it's scalable, replicable, etc. Examples:
- Highly successful new hire boot camp for certain engineering team that will become the blueprint for all engineering onboarding
- Sales simulation exercise that had tremendous impact for its pilot audience, and thus will be rolled out companywide
- Popular and effective learning game with diagnostic/prescriptive test engine that can be repurposed across multiple modalities

See the two examples below for further ideas and guidance.

Word limit has increased from 500 to 600 words.

Outstanding Initiative (5 points) (+2) *Note new total score, structure and criteria!*
Applicant should demonstrate innovation, potential to evolve into a companywide best practice, achieved targeted goal, at least preliminary results.

- **Project scope (1):** 1 for several business units/departments; .5 for a single business unit/department *(Note: this corrects a Training mag typo.)*
- **Linkage to corporate goal (1):** .5 for listing the corporate goal and .5 for tying the training best practice back to the goal (from Section 2.1 or not)
- **Innovation (1):** .25 to 1 for innovation overall OR for in the applicant's industry.
- **Reinforcement (.5):** .25 for describing reinforcement methods and .25 for reinforcement 3+ months post-training *(Note: Reinforcement can be planned but not yet executed, given that the program must be new.)*
- **Senior leadership involvement (.5):** .25 if senior leaders (C-suite or business unit execs) involved in program design, development or marketing and .25 point if involved in facilitation. Include titles of all execs.
- **Level 3 OR 4 results (1):** 1 for specific, numerical Level 3 OR specific, numerical Level 4 results. *See definitions above. Results can be preliminary. Unlike the Best Practice, which requires both Level 3 AND 4 results, here they ask for one or the other (although both would be surely be just dandy).*

2.3 HOURS OF TRAINING: For each of the following "types of employees," how many PER-PERSON HOURS of formal, planned training (excluding orientation) does your organization provide employees ANNUALLY? ☐ NFP

Annual per-person hours

1. Production/Line Employees
2. Supervisory Employees
3. Administration/Support Staff
4. Professional Employees
5. Sales/Account Management
6. Technical/IT Staff
7. Management Employees
8. Senior Management
9. Independent Contractors/Franchisees

They want all POTENTIAL training hours an employee could take, NOT actual training hours completed.

Quantitative score (2 points)
Based on average hours trained (all hours above, divided by the 9 employee categories), score is assigned as:
- 0 for less than 20 hours
- 1 point for 20-40 hours
- 2 points for more than 40 hours

2.4   What is the TOTAL number of each classification of TRAINING PROFESSIONALS in your organization?

Full-Time Trainers: ☐ NFP
(35 hours/week)

Part-Time Trainers: ☐ NFP
(can include employees who spend at least 50% of their time on training but don't report to the Training function)

Subject Matter Experts (SMEs):   ☐ NFP
(full-time employees responsible for some training)

Remember, "part-time trainers" spend at least 50% of their time on any aspect of training, whether or not they're on the training team. *SMEs are NOT part of the quantitative calculation but an FYI to the judges.*

Quantitative score (2 points)
Based on the ratio of employees to trainers (total employees {2.14a+b} to total FT + PT trainers {2.4}), score is:
- .5 point for 151 to 200 employees per trainer
- 1.5 points for between 100 and 150
- 3 points for less than 100

2.5   TRAINING BUDGET: What is your company's TOTAL training budget for calendar year 2017-2018 or your current fiscal year? (Please provide your answer in the form of WHOLE NUMBER in U.S. dollars—do not use words, ranges, or abbreviations. Be sure to include training staff salaries, outside expenditures, materials, services, etc. You can choose to mark your answer NFP, but you MUST provide an answer.)

Total Training Budget $ ☐ NFP

Include all budget your company spends on training, whether or not it comes from your learning function (e.g. separate branch offices' training budgets, budget for conferences and travel, etc.).