Efficacy in Initial Sales Training for Sales Consultants at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho

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Abstract

This research project was designed as a needs assessment for the Qwest Initial Training Program in Idaho Falls, Idaho. The needs assessment was conducted as part of an efficiency evaluation as prompted by the recent merger of Qwest and CenturyLink. The study was conducted through administrating a Qwest Initial Training Survey to a training class who was just finishing the initial training program. The same survey was also given to a class that graduated 5 weeks prior, thus having had the opportunity to implement their training as regular Qwest Sales Consultants. The findings of this study include that the general perception of the Qwest Initial Training Program among all participants was one of satisfaction. Both groups surveyed, felt that the initial training program did well at helping them prepare for their full time position at Qwest. Along with the positive response received about the initial training program, this study also identified several places for possible improvement. Participants reported low perceived levels of confidence in several computer systems used by Qwest Employees on a daily basis. Also, many of the participants in this study recommended more hands-on practice and individualized coaching to help in the learning process.

Section l

Introduction

Qwest Communications was recently acquired by CenturyLink through a 10.6 billion dollar stock swap and is currently in the process of a merger (de la Merced & Wortham, 2010). A merger can be an exciting experience, but there are also many uncertainties that cause fear and speculation for employees and managers alike. This can result in questions such as: "Will call centers be closing? If so, which ones? Are there possibilities for growth and expansion? If so, where will this growth take place? What are current weaknesses and how do other call centers compare?" With an environment such as this, there is increased initiative by management to conduct a total efficiency evaluation.

Although Qwest in Idaho Falls, Idaho was in a very good position going into the merger, there were still opportunities for possible redesign (L. Walters, personal communication, September 14, 2010). The initial training process for sales consultants was one such area. In 2010 this initial training program took eleven weeks to complete and cost the company approximately 11,000 dollars per new hire, which is approximately 220,000 dollars for each training class of 15 to 20 people. Five of the eleven weeks were completed in a classroom setting learning about the company and its products. After classroom instruction, there were three weeks of taking calls with no sales objectives. These weeks were referred to as practice weeks. The remaining four weeks were a testing phase where consultants took calls and had to meet certain objectives in order to pass the initial training process.

The nature of a sales consultant position at Qwest is one of pressure and stress, particularly when an employee is underperforming and not reaching expected goals. Before the administration of this evaluation, only 70% of new employees in the sales consultant positions pass initial training (T. Funderburg, personal communication, September 28, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed by this study was that the 11-week training process for sales consultants at Qwest Communications was experiencing a 30% failure rate. As part of a total efficiency evaluation of the company, Senior Management within the organization requested an efficiency evaluation of the initial training program for sales consultants.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to conduct a training needs assessment for sales consultants as part of an efficiency evaluation of the initial training process at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho. This needs assessment provided the basis for a program review of the initial training process for sales consultants.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Are the expectations of the sales consultant role/position aligned with the organization's goals and objectives?
2. What, if any, revisions are recommended in the content of the initial training program for sales consultants at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho, in order to better prepare those for the sales consultant role/position?

3. What perceptions do sales consultant trainees at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho, have about their training experience regarding their satisfaction with instructional methods, and their levels of confidence and perceived preparedness to perform the functions expected as a sales consultant?
4. What perceptions do sales consultants (in their fourth month of employment at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho) have about their training experience regarding instructional methods and subsequent levels of preparedness to fulfill the expectations as a sales consultant?

Limitation of the Study

Creswell (2003) explains that limitations and delimitations in a study "establish the boundaries, exceptions, reservations, and qualifications inherent in every study" (p. 147). Creswell further explains the purpose of a limitations discussion in a study report is to "identify potential weaknesses of the study" (Creswell, 2003, p. 148).

The main limitation of the study is that it may be difficult for some participants to be honest and forthcoming in self-reported questionnaire responses, even if they have been assured that the results will be anonymous.

Delimitations of the Study

According to Creswell (2003), the purpose of delimitations in a study is to "narrow the scope of the study" (p. 148).

This study is delimited to:

- Phase 1: The review of Qwest Communications' goals and objectives, expectations of the sales consultant position at Qwest, and the current curriculum content for the initial training program at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho.
- Phase 2: Participants include an initial training class of 12 sales consultants who were surveyed during the week of their graduation from the initial training program (11 weeks with Qwest).
- Phase 3: Participants include an initial training class of 9 sales consultants who had been with Qwest for 4 months at the time of their questionnaire participation. For a more accurate comparison, the Phase 3 class was trained by the same trainer as the Phase 2 class.
- The study data collection and analysis took place from December 2010 to April 2011.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as follows for this study:

Facility Check: a computer system used by Qwest Employees to determine the services currently working at a particular house address.

Optical Storage Application Replacement (OSCAR): is a computer system used by Qwest Employees to see old bills, service orders, and notes.

Quote to Order (Q2O): is the main computer program used by Qwest Employees to order services and assist customers.

Qwest@Ease: a product offered to Qwest High Speed Internet Customers which includes: virus protection, online backup, a free computer tune-up, and enhanced technical support.

Regional Order Manager System (ROMS): is a computer system used by Qwest Employees when the main ordering system Q20 is not functional.

Sales consultant: an entry-level position at Qwest Communications where the employee answers customer calls on a full-time basis. Types of calls include: billing, new service, and payment issues.

Sales consultant trainee: a Qwest Employee who is currently in training to be a sales consultant. This is an 11-week process for all new Qwest Employees.

Service Order Manager (SOM): is a computer system used by Qwest Employees to look at pending orders.

Specialized Market Expert (SME): a well-seasoned sales consultant who has been chosen by management to assist other sales consultants in complex billing and service issues. SMEs may also help out with training classes as trainees begin to take phone calls.

USOC's and FIDS: are codes used by Qwest Communications to identify products and services ordered and in use by Qwest Customers.

Summary

Senior management at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho, determined that an efficiency evaluation should be conducted of the initial training program for sales consultants. The significance of the evaluation is that the redesign of the initial training curriculum and training techniques may increase the pass rate of new trainees.

The researcher administered a questionnaire to a census population of recent training participants to more fully understand their perceptions as part of an efficiency evaluation of the initial training process at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho.

Section II

Review of Literature

Introduction

There is an abundance of information and research available on the subject of adult training and learning. This chapter presents the following related concepts and training techniques considered successful in workplace learning situations: adult learning, experiential learning, the 4-MAT system, and workplace learning and evaluation. The purpose of this section is to discuss assumptions about adult learners, provide examples of teaching and training techniques used within the industry to help adults in the learning process, and to explain a process by which training programs may be evaluated.

Adult Learning

The initial training process at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho, is a training process for adult learners. It is therefore necessary to have some background in the area of adult training and learning to properly understand the subject.

Malcolm Shepherd Knowles is considered the father of adult education (Smith, 2002) and made significant contributions to the field from the 1950s to the 1980s. Malcolm Knowles suggested that adults do in fact learn differently than youth. According to Smith (2002), Knowles made the term andragogy popular in the English language. According to Henschke (2011), andragogy is "the art and science of helping adults learn" (p. 34).

Knowles suggested that there are several assumptions that one should make about adult learners. Knowles wrote (as cited in Smith, 2002), "As a person matures his [sic] self

concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being" (para. 33). Smith (2002) describes a people who are self-directed as, "people who take the initiative in learning (proactive learners) learn more things, and learn better, than do people who sit at the feet of teachers passively waiting to be taught (reactive learners)" (para. 46). Knowles also asserts that adult learners have a greater knowledge base of experience to work with than younger learners. As stated by Knowles (cited in Smith, 2002), "As a person matures he [sic] accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning" (para. 34). Relating to these experiences during the training process can be a powerful adult training technique.

There are many different training processes and techniques that can help adult learners be proactive in the learning process and capitalize on learning through experience. Two such methods which could be used are the Experiential Learning Method and the 4-MAT Method. Each of these methods is considered briefly below.

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning methods focus on learning through experience. The Association for Business Simulation and Experimental Learning (ABSEL) has completed research and work in the field of experiential learning and its effects in business and industry. ABSEL quotes Confucius saying, "Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I will understand" (Gentry, 1990, p. 9).

ABSEL members state that students can learn from experience. According to Gentry (1990), "It is hard to argue that experience will not lead to learning under the right conditions.

However, it will be argued that the resultant learning can be in error unless care is taken to assure that those conditions occur" (p. 9). Gentry refers to Wolfe and Byrne's (1975) experiential learning task structure as a basis for a discussion on experiential learning. Wolfe and Byrne's four phase experiential learning task structure includes: design, conduct, evaluation, and feedback. This experiential learning task structure will be briefly discussed below.

Wolfe and Byrne (1975) explain that the design phase of the experiential learning task structure mainly involves the instructor setting the stage for the training experience. This may include: planning to make sure the experience will produce the desired results for the learners, preparing the class or learning environment for the experience, and becoming clear on objectives. In the conduct phase, Wolfe and Byrne submit that the trainer must hold to the design plan, but may need to be flexible to accommodate his or her specific learning group. Wolfe and Byrne further advance that the instructor does the evaluation; however, it is important as well that students have the opportunity to evaluate the experience for themselves. Finally, Wolfe and Byrne conclude that feedback is something that should be attended to through the entire process. They claim that the instructor needs to build up the positive experiences, while trying to eliminate the negative ones. The experiential teaching and training method is one of many methods that can be used to help adults in the learning process through focusing on experience.

The 4-MAT System

Another training system among many that could be used to help adults in the learning process is the 4-MAT System developed by Bernice McCarthy. Bernice and Dennis McCarthy's (2006) book, *Teaching around the 4MAT cycle,* describes well the 4-MAT teaching Method process. McCarthy and McCarthy explain that the 4-MAT Method is based on the principle that people learn differently in the way they perceive and process information. Differences in perceptions are measured on a continuum from highly experiential to highly conceptual. On that continuum, an individual may land anywhere from preferring highly engaging activities and physical memories, to preferences for learning through ideas, language, and naming systems (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2006).

McCarthy and McCarthy (2006) further explain that differences in processing information are measured on a continuum from action processing to reflective processing. On this continuum, an individual may be anywhere from a hands-on learner, to one having preferences for sitting and reflecting to connect the new information to past experience.

According to Nicoll-Senft and Seider (2010), "4MAT identifies four interrelated learning styles based on a continuum of how we perceive and process new information. Our individual learning style results from where we naturally fall on these continuums (sic)" (p. 20). The names of the four different learning styles are Imaginative Learners, Analytic Learners, Common Sense Learners, and Dynamic Learners (Nicoll-Senft & Seider, 2010).

McCarthy and McCarthy's (2006) 4-MAT Method of teaching is accomplished by teaching in a way that all four learning groups relate to the training. McCarthy and McCarthy assert that this includes individuals who prefer activities, lectures, experimenting, or sharing

what they have learned. This 4-step method typically starts with an activity to engage the learners and eventually help them connect with what will be taught. The second step is the actual teaching of the subject (where traditional training never leaves). The third step involves a testing and trying stage. This stage also involves experimenting with what is being taught. The testing and trying stage is similar to experiential learning, as taught by Wolfe and Byrne, in the previous section. The last and fourth step involves the opportunity for students to share what they have learned with others (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2006).

The 4-MAT Method is one of many teaching and training methods which could be used by teachers or trainers to enhance the adult learning experience. These methods could also be used in workplace learning situations such as the Qwest Initial Training Program.

Workplace Learning and Evaluation

Many companies use on-the-job training through mentors and coaches. According to the U.S. Department of the Interior, (1998), "On-the-job training (OJT) is one of the best training methods because it is planned, organized, and conducted at the employee's worksite" (para. 2). On-the-job training is used by Qwest in their initial training program. This method can be effective because the employee has someone within the company who he or she can go to with questions or concerns as his or her career progresses. However, as Jacobs (2003) states, "developing high levels of employee competence is one of the most challenging issues for organizations" (p. 1).

There are many different methods and ideas for evaluating a training program. A few of these include: Michael Patton's Utilization Focused Evaluation, Daniel Stufflebeam's CIPP

model, and Kirkpatrick and Kirpatrick's four levels of training evaluation. This report will briefly discuss Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick's (2006) four levels of training evaluation. These four levels are commonly used in industry and have been translated into several different languages. In 1959, Donald Kirkpatrick developed his four levels of training evaluation: reaction, learning, behavior, and results. The motivation for this was to assist companies and organizations in the process of determining the efficacy of their training programs. Many companies and government organizations now use Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick's four-level assessment method within their organization. The Employee Security Department of Washington State (2010) stated "The most widely used and popular model for the evaluation of training programs is known as 'The Four Levels of Learning Evaluation'" (para. 1). Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006) claim this four-level assessment can help trainers understand the strengths and weaknesses of their individual training programs. Their four-level assessment is briefly discussed below.

According to Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006), the first level of evaluation is described in this way, "As the word reaction implies, evaluation on this level measures how those who participate in the program react to it" (p. 21). Kirkpatrick and his son refer to the first level of evaluation as the customer service measurement. The Kirkpatricks discuss the importance, even for in-house trainers, to treat their learners as customers (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). This study included a level one instrument to determine Qwest Employees' reaction to the initial training process.

Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick's (2006) second level of evaluation assesses the learning, or lack thereof, which has taken place in a specific training environment. Kirkpatrick and his son

state, “Learning can be defined as the extent to which participants change attitudes, improve knowledge, and/or increase skill as a result of attending the program” (p. 22). Kirkpatrick and his son claim that trainers must clearly set specific objectives in order to gauge whether or not learning has taken place. These objectives could include a change in attitude, increase in knowledge, or an improved skill (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). This study did not include a level two instrument, but may be included as a recommendation for the Qwest Initial Training Program in the future.

Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick’s (2006) third level of evaluation focuses on the change in behavior which takes place as a result of a training program. Kirkpatrick and his son (2006), point out that many trainers skip levels one and two and simply measure level three. Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick’s state that this is a mistake, because a participant may enjoy the training and even learn from it, but there may be other factors hindering implementation. Kirkpatrick and his son point out four main conditions which are necessary for an actual change in behavior: desire, knowledge of what needs to be changed, the right climate, and effective rewards (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). This study did not include a level three instrument; however, a level three instrument may be included as a recommendation for Qwest in the future.

Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006) define the fourth level of evaluation in this way, “the final results can include increased production, improved quality, decreased costs, reduced frequency and/or severity of accidents, increased sales, reduced turnover, and higher profits” (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006, p. 25). A level four instrument was not included in this study;

however, after the implementation of changes brought about by this research project, it is recommended that Qwest use a level 4 instrument to track the beneficial results of the redesign of the initial training program.

Summary

This section discussed important topics relating to this study such as: adult learning, experiential learning, the 4-MAT system, and workplace learning and evaluation. This section summarized applicable research on adult leaning, gave examples of teaching and training techniques that could be used to help adults in the learning process, and also explained one process by which training programs can be evaluated. Section III discusses the methods applied in this study.

Section lll

Methods

The purpose of this study was to conduct a training needs assessment for sales consultants as part of an efficiency evaluation of the initial training process at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho. A needs assessment is conducted to "emphasize discrepancies between an existing state and a desired state" (Suter, 2006, p. 151). This needs assessment was conducted in a three-stage process.

The first stage included a review of the Qwest Communications Initial Training Program curriculum to determine the currency and relevancy of content when compared with the company's goals and expectations.

The second stage of the needs assessment included a perception survey questionnaire which was administered to the initial training program's participants at the end of the 11-week training program. This survey questionnaire helped to determine the participants' satisfaction levels with instructional methods as well as their levels of confidence and perceived preparedness to perform the functions expected within the role of a sales consultant.

The third stage of the needs assessment was completed by administering the same perception survey questionnaire to Stage Three participants (Qwest employees who had been working for Qwest for four months.) The perceptions of Stage Two and Stage Three questionnaire participants were then compared. This comparison brought to light the differences in perceptions between the two groups of employees. One group just finishing up

the training program, and the other group having had the opportunity to apply the training in their work setting.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Are the expectations of the sales consultant role/position aligned with the organization's goals and objectives?
2. What, if any, revisions are recommended in the content of the initial training program for sales consultants at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho, in order to be aligned with the expectations of the sales consultant role/position?
3. What perceptions do sales consultant trainees at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho, have about their training experience regarding their satisfaction with instructional methods, and their levels of confidence and perceived preparedness to perform the functions expected as a sales consultant?
4. What perceptions do sales consultants (in their fourth month of employment at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho) have about their training experience regarding instructional methods and subsequent levels of preparedness to fulfill the expectations as a sales consultant?

Research Design

This study used a quantitative descriptive approach with a survey to facilitate a needs assessment at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho. The first 13 questions in this study were treated quantitatively. Quantitative research methods are based on the collection and statistical analysis of numerical data and are used to describe current conditions, investigate

relationships, and study cause-effect phenomenon (Suter, 2006). The last two questions in this study were treated qualitatively and reduced to themes. Suter (2006) defines qualitative research as "research aimed at explaining complex phenomena through verbal descriptions rather than testing hypothesis with numerical values" (p. 41).

This study describes the current conditions and demographics of Qwest Communications initial training classes for sales consultants in Idaho Falls, Idaho. In this study, a survey questionnaire was used to gather information from select Qwest Communication training groups. This needs assessment identified the perceptions of employees' levels of satisfaction regarding the training techniques and methods used in the initial training process. This needs assessment provided the basis for a program review of the initial training process for sales consultants.

According to the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46.102(d), a needs assessment does not fall under the definition of research; therefore a Human Subjects Committee approval was not necessary.

Data Collection Instrument

The "Qwest Initial Training Survey" was developed as a Level 1 instrument as defined by (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006), specifically for the data collection for this study (Appendix A). The Quest Initial Training Survey was reviewed and approved by a panel of researchers in the Human Research Training and Development Department for face validity (Gay, Mills, and Airasian, 2008). Questions one through eleven used a four-point Likert scale and were statistically analyzed as quantitative data using measures of central tendency. This Likert scale

uses an agree-disagree continuum. This continuum can consist of a scale of one to five: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. In this study, a four-point Likert scale was chosen due to its ability to provide discrete choices for the researcher to measure positive and negative perceptions in a concise manner without the use of a neutral option. The main four points of this Likert scale include: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree (Suter, 2006, p. 95), in a one to four scale.

Questions 1 and 2 were asked to help identify whether the training methods and curriculum used in the initial training process helped the trainee relate to what he or she was learning in a way that would assist in comprehension and retention. Question one stated, *the presentations used in Initial Training helped me relate to what I was learning.* Question two stated, *the curriculum (presentations and activities) in Initial Training helped me relate to what I was learning.*

Question 3 stated, *I know how the values, mission, and goals of Qwest relate to me as a sales consultant.* This question focused on the trainees' broader knowledge of how the values, mission, and goals of Qwest relate to them as employees of Qwest.

Question 4 stated, *I feel confident in my sales abilities as a result of the sales techniques I learned in Initial Training.* This question was designed to measure the trainees' level of satisfaction with regard to the sales techniques and skills which were presented as a part of the initial training program.

Questions 5 through ten were important in determining the perceived levels of confidence in the needed computer skills and systems used by Qwest Consultants on a regular

basis. Question five stated, *I received sufficient time to practice with the computer programs used by Qwest employees.* Question 6 stated, *I feel confident in processing orders through Q20.* Question 7 stated, *I feel confident reading orders in OSCAR.* Question 8 stated, *I feel confident in processing orders through ROMs*. Question 9 stated, I know how to read an order in SOMS to assist me in helping my customers. Question 10 was the last of the computer system questions and stated, *I know when Facility Check can be a tool for helping customers*.

Question 11 stated, *The initial training process I received at Qwest prepared me for my full time position.* This question asked for an overall ranking of the trainees' experience with the Qwest Initial Training Program.

Questions 12 through 15 were answered in narrative form. Questions 12 and 13 ask the sales consultant to list the Qwest products that he or she is most and least confident in selling. This helped to determine potential areas of weakness in curriculum with regards to the products and services offered by Qwest Communications.

Questions 14 and 15 asked the consultant to offer critical (positive and negative) feedback for the Qwest Initial Training Program they experienced.

The responses of Stage Two and Stage Three participants were then statistically compared to examine any differences in perceptions in their levels of satisfaction with the training methods used during the initial training program. This comparison highlighted the differences between employees just completing their training program with those who have had the opportunity to apply the training in their work setting. Both Stage Two and Stage Three participants were trained by the same Qwest Trainer.

Participants

The population of the Qwest Initial Training Survey consisted of 21 Qwest Employees from two different training classes at Qwest. The Stage Two population included an initial training class of twelve individuals (nine of which responded to the questionnaire) just finishing their 11-week initial training program. The Stage Three participants included an initial training class consisting of nine individuals (eight of which responded to the questionnaire), who have been working for Qwest Communications for four months (one month and one week longer than the Stage 2 participants). The Stage Three participants have had the opportunity to apply the knowledge they gained in the initial training program as a full time Qwest Sales Consultants for over a month.

Sampling

Due to the small population of the study, the researcher included the entire population, a census (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2008), in the research sample. Therefore, the sample number equaled the population number, and all of the 21 employees in the two training groups were included in the study.

Data Analysis

Research question number one was analyzed through a side-by-side comparison of the Quest goals and objectives with the goals and objectives of the sales consultant Role/position, (see Table 1). The questionnaire questions were separated into quantitative and qualitative categories to complete the data analysis processes. All quantitative responses were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and analyzed using measures of central tendency. Suter

(2006) describes measures of central tendency as “a characteristic of a distribution of scores that describes where scores tend to center” (p. 427). The measures of central tendency that will be referred to in this study include: mode, mean, median, range, and standard deviation. McMillian and Schumacher (2001) explain that the mode is “the score that occurs most frequently in a distribution” (p. 217). The mean is described by McMillian and Schumacher (2001) as “the arithmetic average of all the scores” (p. 215). McMillian and Schumacher (2001) explain that the median is “that point which divides a rank-ordered distribution into halves that have an equal number of scores” (p. 216). The range is defined by McMillian and Schumacher (2001) as “the difference between the highest and lowest scores in the distribution” (p. 220). McMillian and Schumacher (2001) explain standard deviation as “a numerical index that indicates the average variability of the scores” (p. 221).

The responses from Stage Two and Stage Three participants were then compared to determine differences in perceptions. The analysis of the survey questionnaire assists in answering research question number two, which is addressed in detail in Section V.

The qualitative responses (questions 14 and 15) were then coded and grouped into categories, which were further reduced to themes using generic qualitative analysis (Merriam, 1998). The researcher accomplished this by clustering and categorizing similar responses into emergent themes. In this questionnaire for example, the researcher grouped the responses of: “scenarios,” “interactive learning,” and “hands on training” into the theme *Preference for Hands-on Practice Training*.

Summary

The population of the study consisted of two different Qwest Initial Training Classes with a total population of 21. The entire population was included in the study and 17 responded. The quantitative data were collected into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and then statistically analyzed using measures of central tendency. The narrative responses were treated qualitatively and reduced to themes.

Section lV

Results

The purpose of this study was to conduct a needs assessment of the initial training process at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho. The significance of this needs assessment is that it contributed to the efficiency evaluation process that Qwest conducted during the 2010-2011 merger process with CenturyLink.

The research questions for this study were:

1. Are the expectations of the sales consultant role/position aligned with the organization's goals and objectives?
2. What, if any, revisions are recommended in the content of the initial training program for sales consultants at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho, in order to be aligned with the expectations of the sales consultant role/position?
3. What perceptions do sales consultant trainees at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho, have about their training experience regarding their satisfaction with instructional methods, and their levels of confidence and perceived preparedness to perform the functions expected as a sales consultant?
4. What perceptions do sales consultants (in their fourth month of employment at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho) have about their training experience regarding instructional methods and subsequent levels of preparedness to fulfill the expectations as a sales consultant?

Phase One

Phase one included research question number one: *Are the expectations of the sales consultant role/position aligned with the organization's goals and objectives?* This research question was analyzed through comparing the Qwest goals and objectives with the expectations of the sales consultant role/position (see table 1).

Table 1

Side-By-Side Comparison between Qwest Goals and Objectives and the Expectations of the Sales Consultant Role/Position.

The goals and objectives of Qwest (2009)	**The expectations of the sales consultant role/position are defined by Qwest (2010)**
We demonstrate the value we place on our relationships with customers by listening to their needs, considering their requests as opportunities and striving to deliver precisely what they want and need.	Perfect the customer experience by providing excellent service on every call.
Qwest is committed to financial excellence, which we achieve through the pursuit of profitability and sustained growth.	Meet required sales objectives by selling Qwest products and services.
We demonstrate the value we place on our relationships with customers by listening to their needs, considering their requests as opportunities and striving to deliver precisely what they want and need.	Consult with customers to gather information and make recommendations for their communication and entertainment needs.
We succeed as a team, challenging and helping one another to develop our skills, to excel at achieving our objectives and to realize our highest potential.	Use various computer systems (20 or more)/screens simultaneously to process sales and service orders.
We focus our energy and intellect on wisely stewarding our resources, enhancing our productivity and effectively meeting customer needs.	Build and maintain strong customer rapport. Consult, multi-task, and problem solve with the customer.

Phase Two

The Phase Two participants included a population of 12 trainees who were asked to complete an online questionnaire the same week they graduated from Initial Training. Of the population of 12 who were asked to participate in the questionnaire, a sample of nine participants responded. The response rate for the Phase Two participants was therefore 75%.

In questions 1 through 11, participants responded to a Likert scale with 4 choices: #1 strongly agree, #2 *is agree*, #3 *is disagree*, and #4 is *strongly disagree*. The researcher assigned the correlating numbers to each response choice to assist in the calculation of the measures of central tendency. The mean, mode, median, standard deviation, and range were calculated for questions 1 through 11 and are shown in the Table 1. Each questions' responses are individually reported below.

Question 1.

Question 1 is, *The presentations used in Initial Training helped me relate to what I was learning.* The mode, the score obtained most frequently, resulted in a 2 (*agree*). Seven (78%) of the participants responded that they *agree* that the presentations used in the initial training program helped them to relate to what they were learning. One respondent (11%) reported to *strongly agree* that the presentations used in the initial training program helped him or her relate to what he or she was learning, thus 89% of respondents *agree* or *strongly* agree with question 1. Only 1 (11%) of the participants, indicated that he or she *disagreed* with question 1, (see Figure 1). The range for question one resulted in 1 to 3.

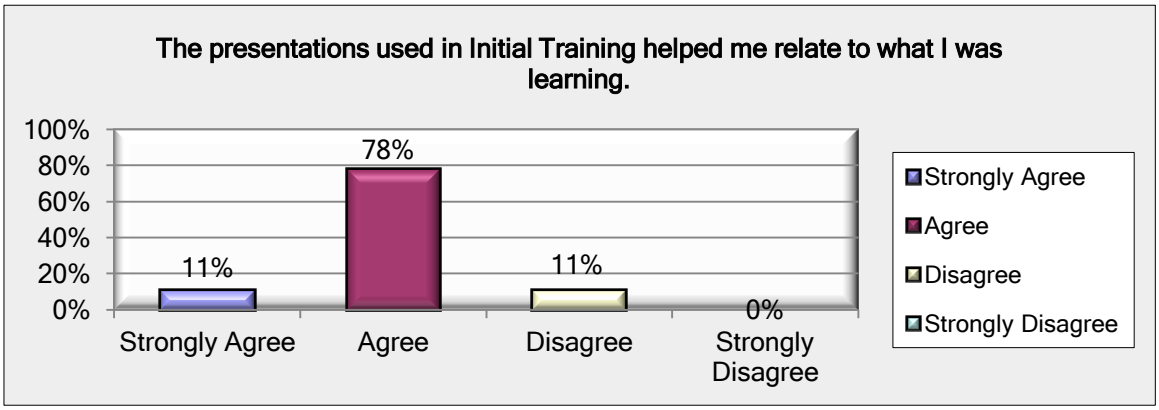


Figure 1. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 1.

Question 2.

Question 2 is, *The curriculum (presentations and activities) in Initial Training helped me relate to what I was learning.* All 9 (100%) of respondents *agreed* that the curriculum (presentations and activities) in the initial training program helped them relate to what they were learning, (see Figure 2). The mode and mean were the same at 2 (*agree*). The range for question 2 was 2 to 2.

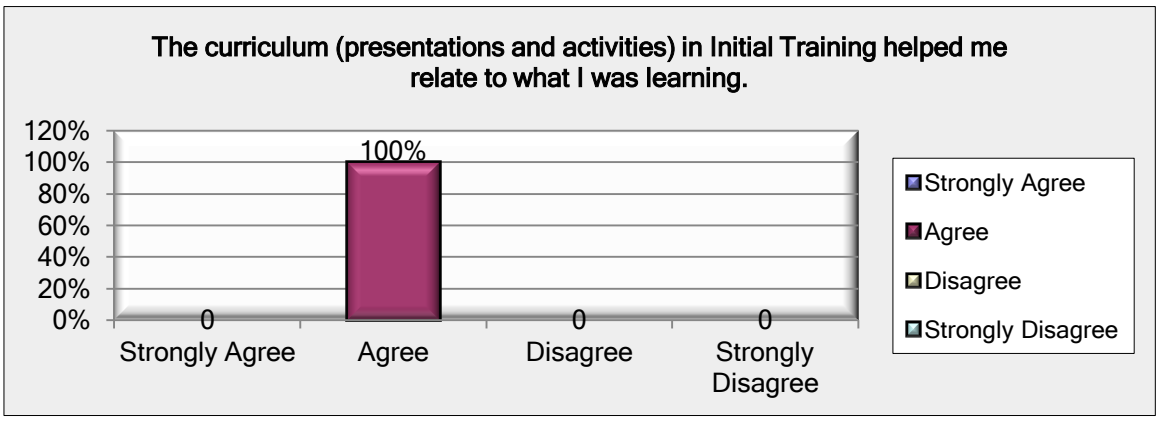


Figure 2. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 2.

Question 3.

Question 3 is, *I know how the values, mission, and goals of Qwest relate to me as a sales consultant.* Six (67%) of participants *strongly agreed* that they knew how the values, mission, and goals of Qwest relate to them as sales consultants. The questionnaire results indicated a mode of 1 (*strongly agree*). Two (22%) of respondents also *agreed* with question number three, indicating that 89% of participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with question 3. Only 1 (11%) of respondents surveyed *disagreed* with question 3, (see Figure 3). The range for question 3 was 1 to 3.

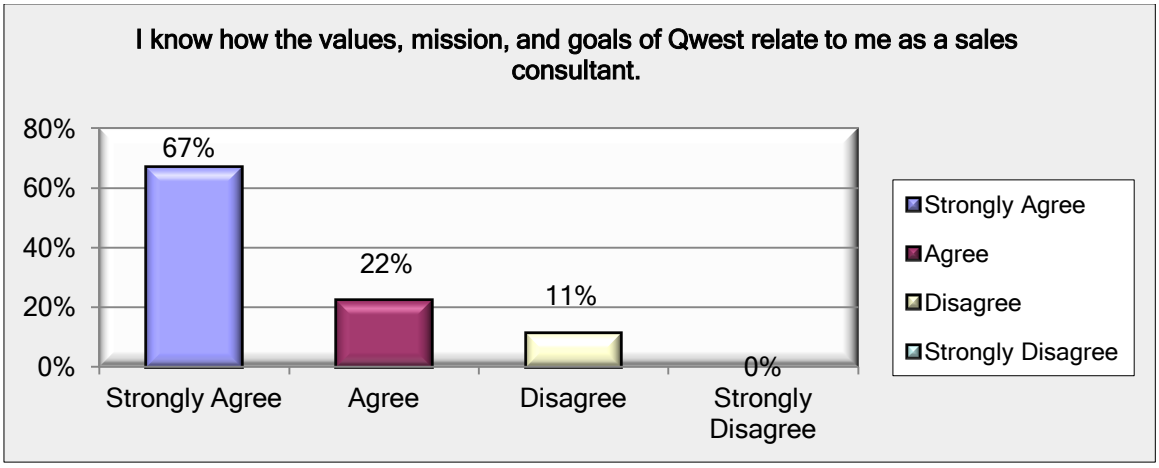


Figure 3. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 3.

Question 4.

Question 4 is, *I feel confident in my sales abilities as a result of the sales techniques I learned in Initial Training.* The mode for question 4 was 1 (*strongly agree*). Four (44%) of respondents indicated that they *strongly agree* that they feel more confident in their sales abilities as a result of the sales techniques taught in the initial training program. Three (33%) of

participants also *agree* with question 4, therefore (78%) of the participants surveyed agreed that their confidence in their sales ability had increased as a result of the initial training process. Two (22%) of the participants surveyed *disagreed* with question number 4, (see Figure 4). The range for question 4 was 1 to 3.

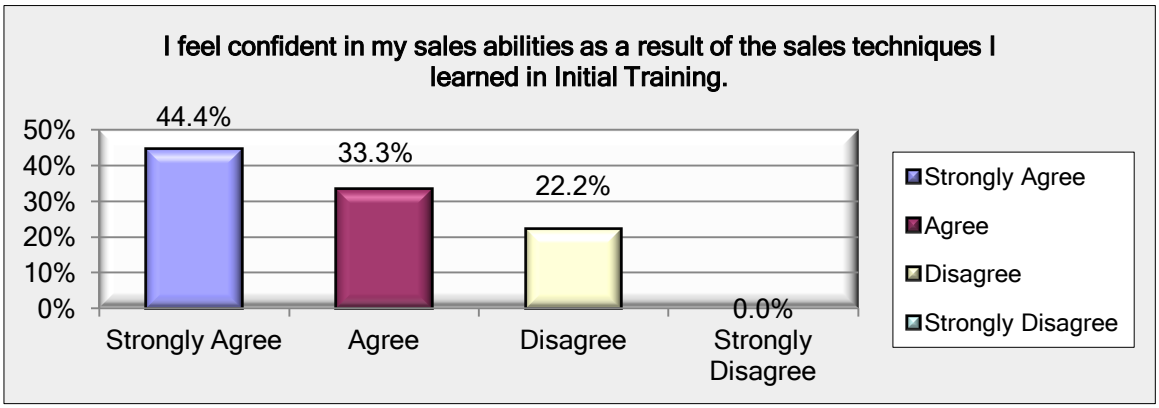


Figure 4. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 4.

Question 5.

Question 5 is, *I received sufficient time to practice with the computer programs used by Qwest employees.* The Mode for question 5 resulted in 2 (*agree*). Five (56%) of participants *agreed* that they had received sufficient time to practice with the computer programs. The remaining 4 participants indicated that they *strongly agree* with question 5. Nine (100%) of participants indicated that they had received sufficient time to practice with the computer programs, (see Figure 5). The range for question 5 was 1 to 2.

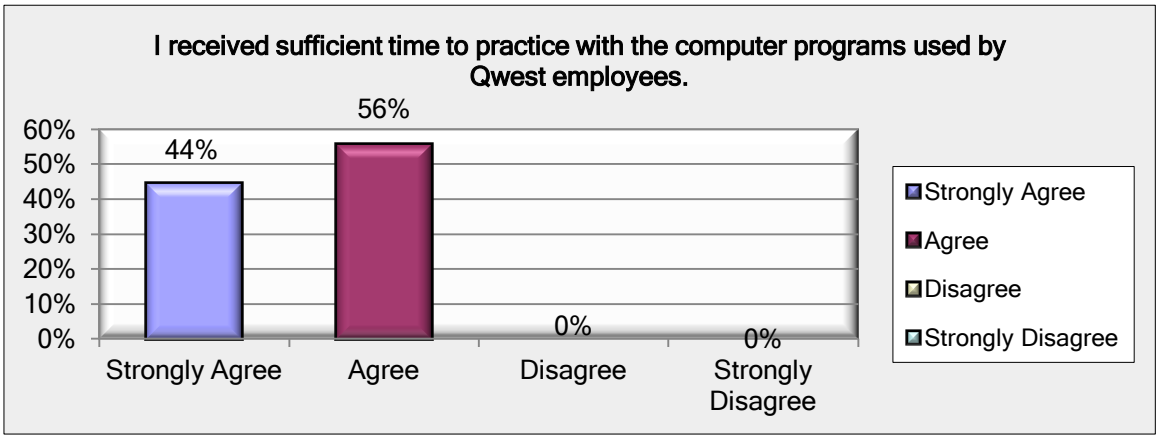


Figure 5. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 5.

Question 6.

Question 6 is, *I feel confident in processing orders through Q20.* The mode for question 6 was 1 (*strongly agree*). Five (56%) of participants *strongly agreed* that they felt confident in processing orders through Q20. The remaining 4 (44%) of participants indicated that they also *agreed* with question 6. Nine (100%) of participants indicated that they feel confident in processing orders through Q20, (see Figure 6). The range for question 6 was 1 to 2.

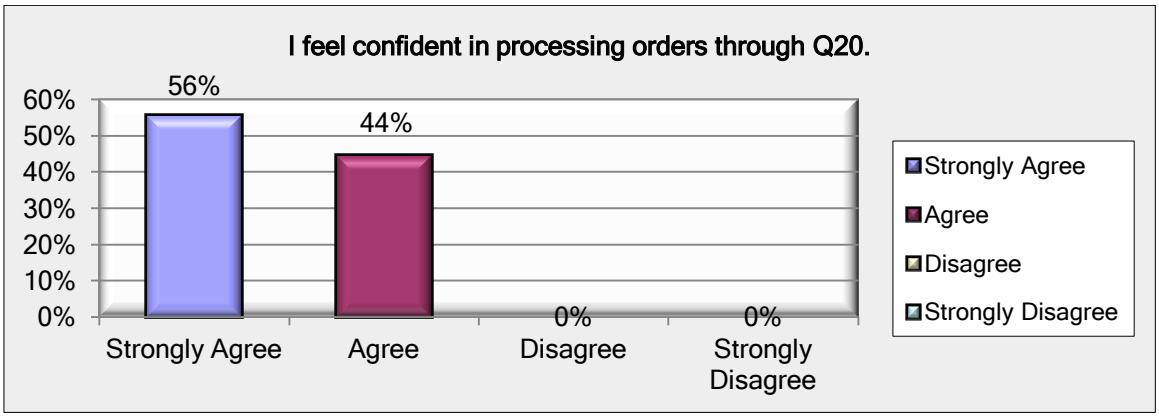


Figure 6. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 6.

Question 7.

Question 7 is, *I feel confident reading orders in OSCAR.* The results for question 7 indicated a mode of 3 (*disagree*). Four (45%) of the participants surveyed *disagreed* with the statement indicating that they did not feel confident in reading orders in OSCAR. Three (33%) *strongly disagreed* with the statement proclaiming confidence in reading orders in OSCAR, thus 78% of participants surveyed *disagreed* with question 7, (See Figure 7). Two (22%) of participants surveyed did *agree* that they did feel confident in reading orders in OSCAR. No participants strongly agreed with the statement in question 7, (see Figure 7). The range for question 7 resulted in 2 to four.

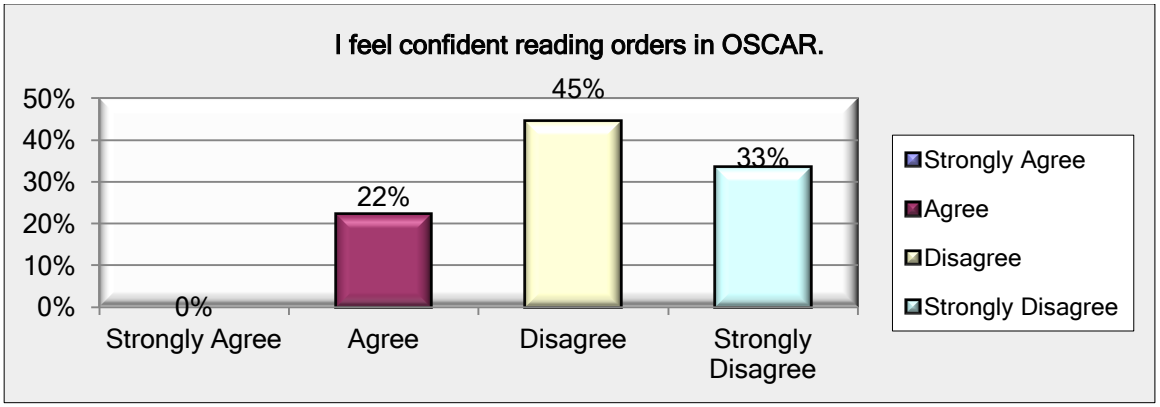


Figure 7. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 7.

Question 8.

Question 8 is, *I feel confident in processing orders through ROMs*. The data for question 8 showed a mode of 3 (*disagree*). Six (67%) of participants surveyed *disagreed* with the statement that they felt confident in processing orders through ROMS. Three (33%) of respondents identified that they did *agree* with the statement, (see Figure 8). The range for question 8 was 2 to 3.

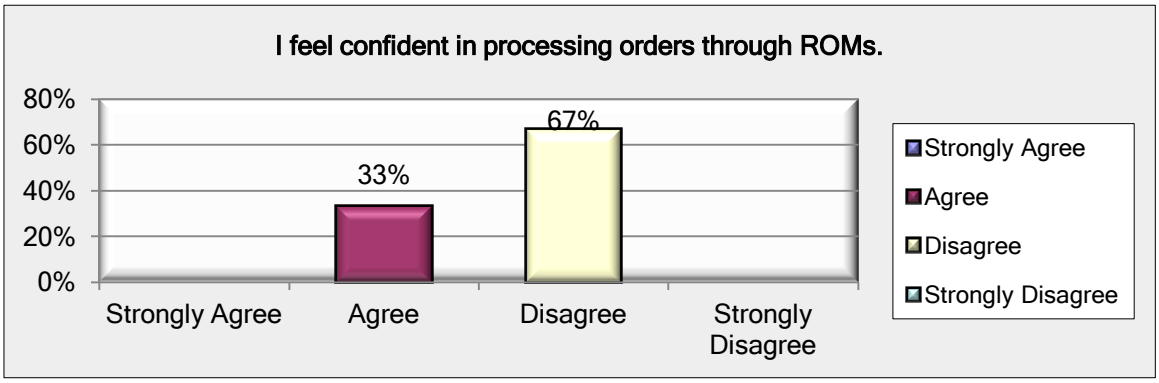


Figure 8. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 8.

Question 9.

Question 9 is, *I know how to read an order in SOMS to assist me in helping my customers*. Figure 9 shows that 4 (44.4%) of participants surveyed *agree* that they know how to read an order in SOMS. Four (44.4%), however, *disagree* with the notion that they know how to read an order in SOMS. Therefore the data for question 9 showed a mode of 2.5 (an average of the bimodal response). One (11.2%) of participants surveyed *strongly disagree* with question 9, leaving 55.6% *disagreeing* that they know how to read an order in SOMS, (see Figure 9). The range for question 9 resulted in 2 to 4.

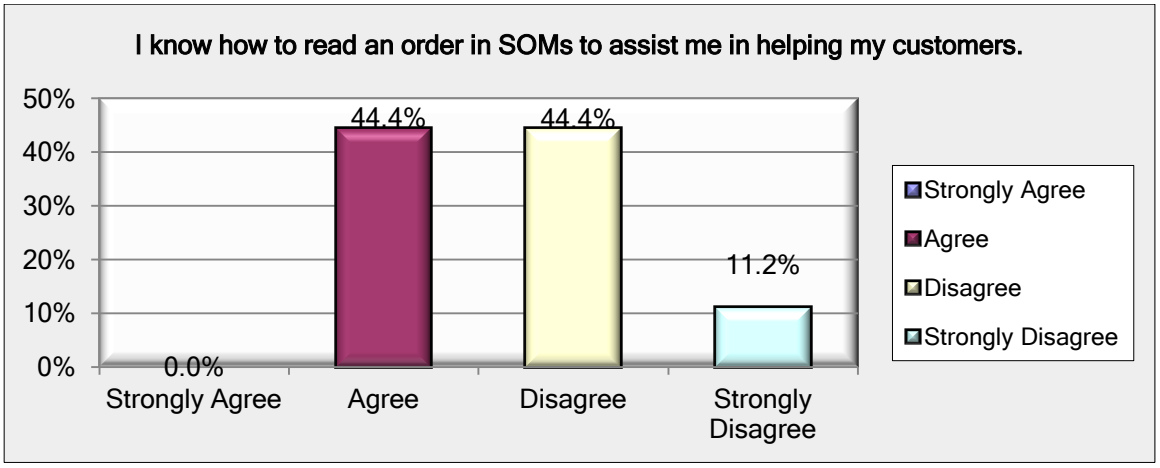


Figure 9. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 9.

Question 10.

Question 10 is, *I know when Facility Check can be a tool for helping customers*. The majority of participants *strongly agreed* with the statement that they know when Facility Check can be a tool for helping customers. As shown in figure 10, the mode for question 10 was 1 (*strongly agree*). Five (56%) of participants surveyed *strongly agreed* with question 10. Four (44%) *agreed* with the statement found in question 10, thus 100% of participants *agree* that they know how Facility Check can be used as a tool for helping customers, (see Figure 10). The range for question 10 was 1 to 2.

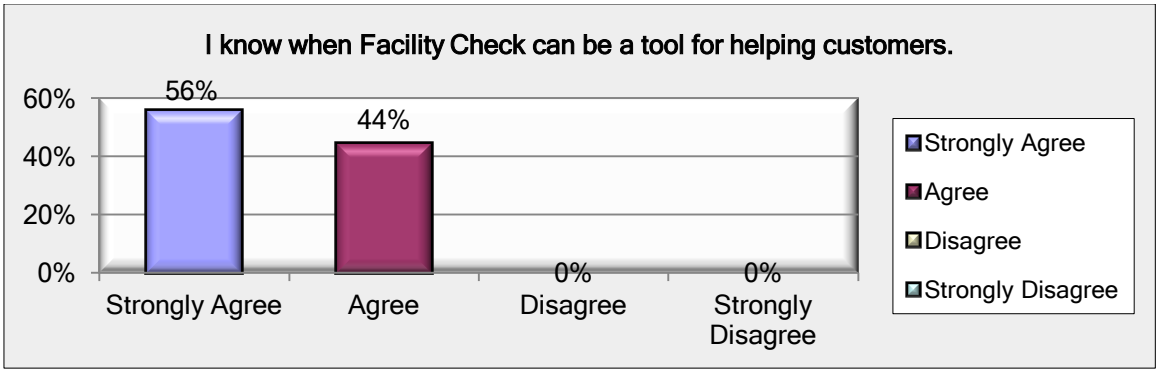


Figure 10. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 10.

Question 11.

Question 11 is, *The initial training process I received at Qwest prepared me for my full time position*. As shown in figure 11, the mode was 2 (*agree*). Eight (89%) of participants surveyed *agree*d with question 11, and . one (11%) *strongly agreed* with it, thus 100% of

participants *agree* that that the initial training process they received at Qwest prepared them for their full time position, (see Figure 11). The range for question 11 was 1 to 2.

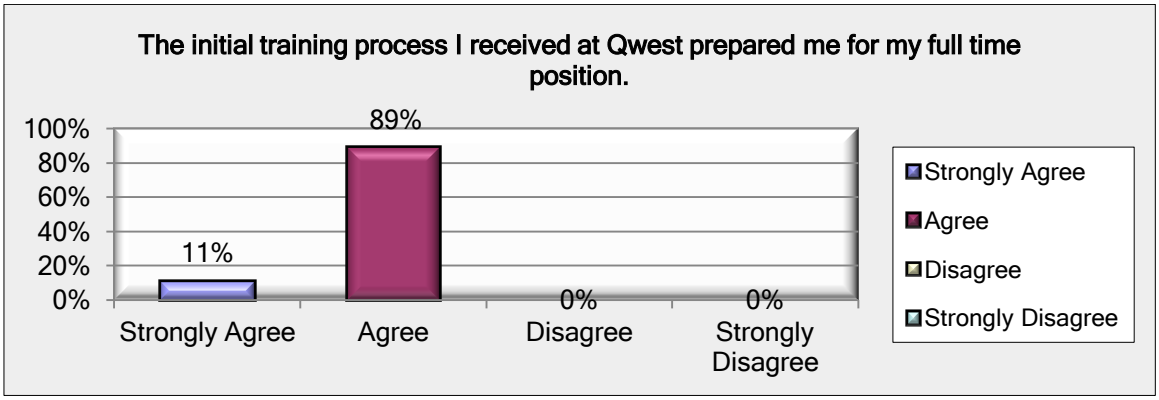


Figure 11. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 11.

Summary of Questions Analyzed by Measures of Central Tendency

Table 2

Mean, Mode, Median, Standard Deviation, and Range of Phase 2 Participants Responses to the Qwest Initial Training Survey

	Questions	Mean	Mode	Median	Stan. Dev.	Range
1	The presentations used in Initial Training helped me relate to what I was learning.	2	2	2	0.5	1 to 3
2	The curriculum (presentations and activites) in Initial Training helped me relate to what I was learning.	2	2	2	0	2 to 2
3	I know how the values, mission, and goals of Qwest relate to me as a sales consultant.	1.4	1	2	0.726	1 to 3
4	I feel confident in my sales abilites as a result of the sales techniques I learned in Initial Ttraining.	1.8	1	2	0.833	1 to 2
5	I received sufficient time to practice with the computer programs used by Qwest employees.	1.6	2	2	0.527	1 to 2
6	I feel confident in processing orders through Q20.	1.4	1	1	0.527	1 to 2
7	I feel confident reading orders in Oscar.	3.1	3	3	0.782	2 to 3
8	I feel confident in processing orders through ROMs.	2.7	3	3	0.5	2 to 3
9	I know how to read an order in SOMs to assist me in helping my customers.	2.3	3	2	0.717	1 to 3
10	I know when Facility Check can be a tool for helping customers.	1.4	1	1	0.527	1 to 2
11	The initial training process I received at Qwest prepared me for my full time possition.	1.9	1	2	0.333	1 to 2

The most common mode, the score which appears most for the Phase 2 participants was 1 (*strongly agree*). To agree or strongly agree with the statements in the questionnaire reflects positively on the training program. To *disagree* or *strongly disagree* with a statement indicates that something did not work well for the employee in the initial training program.

The next most common mode was 2 (*agree*) and 3 (*disagree*). The research indicates that most of the questions in the questionnaire were responded to in a positive manner, but that there were a few areas where respondents identified possible weaknesses.

The total mean, average, for all the questions is 1.97. This average indicates a high level of satisfaction with the initial training process as a whole.

Question 12.

Question 12 is, *I feel most confident in selling the following Qwest products*. For questions 12 through 15, respondents were typing into an open text box and were therefore were able to write as much or as little as they desired. The responses of the participants to question 12 has been graphed can be seen in figure 12. Five (63%) of the responses recorded indicated that they were most confident in selling Qwest High Speed Internet. Four (50%) of respondents surveyed felt most confident in selling Qwest Home Phones. Three (38%) felt the most confidence in selling Qwest @Ease. Only 1 (13%) of participants surveyed felt that they were most confident in selling DirecTV, (see Figure 12).

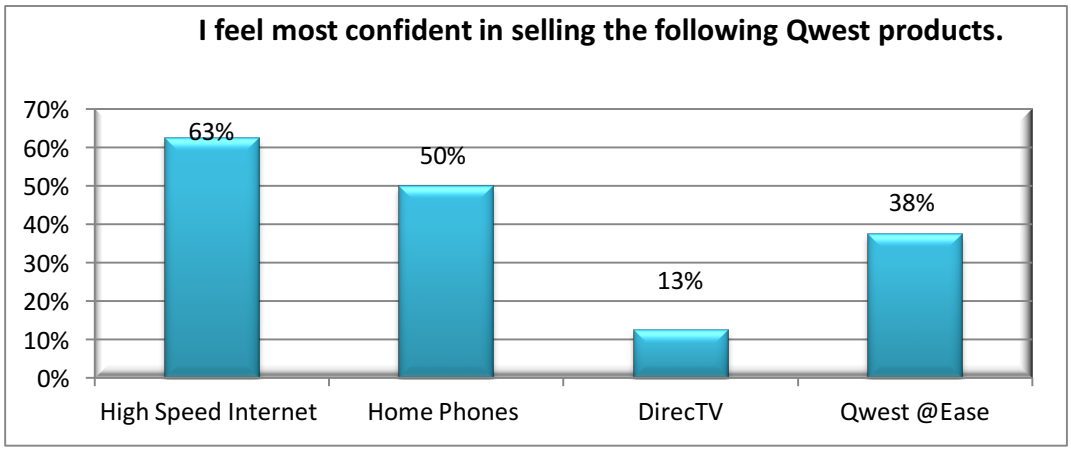


Figure 12. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 12.

Question 13.

Question 13 is, *I feel least confident in selling the following Qwest products*. Question 13 correlated well with question 12 in that those products rated high in question 12 were rated low in question 13 and vice versa. Four (50%) of those surveyed felt least confident in selling DirecTV. Two (25%) of respondents surveyed felt that they were least confident in selling Qwest @Ease and internet add-ons. One (13%) was least confident in selling VOIP Phones, (see Figure 13).

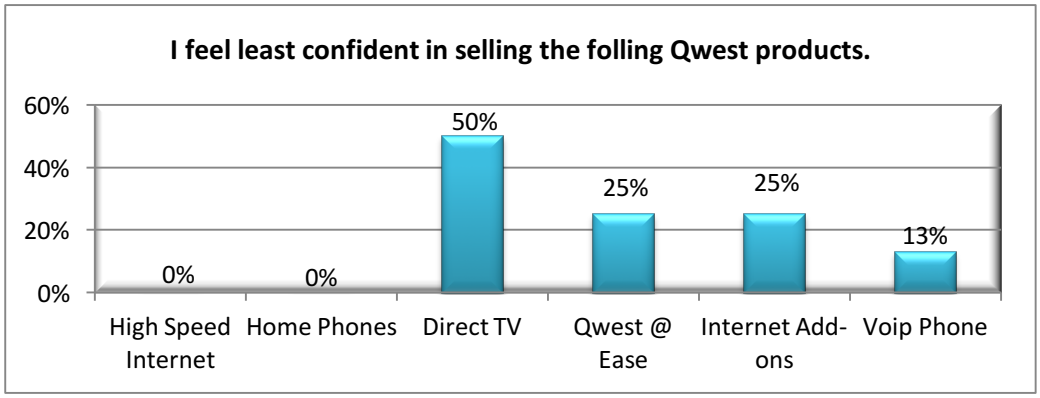


Figure 13. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 13.

Questions 14 and 15.

Question 14 is, W*hat did you consider most helpful about initial training?* Question 15 asks, W*hat improvements would you suggest for the initial training program?* Because the participants' responses to both questions overlap, the response data were analyzed and evaluated together, resulting in the following emergent themes: Preference for Hands-on Practice Training, Friendly work culture, and More Time and Practice with Systems Software. Each theme will be further discussed below.

Preference for Hands-on Practice Training.

Many of the Phase 2 respondents replied to questions 14 and 15 by stating that they either enjoyed the hands-on practice in initial training, or that they wished there was more time for hands-on practice. Because of the large number of responses in this category, the researcher clustered the responses and labeled the theme Preference for Hands-on Practice Training. One respondent replied that the most beneficial part of training was, "The practice phase of just getting used to talking on the phones and getting used to the kinds of calls we would be having." Another respondent said that one of the improvements that he or she would suggest for the initial training program would be a, "little more role play of working on the computers and systems would have helped me more before getting on the phones." Others stated, "being on the phones," "practice," "online practice," and "more phone time."

One respondent reported that the most helpful part of the initial training program was the Sizzle Presentation. The Sizzle Training is a sales training that includes training techniques such as lecture, use of video, and demonstration.

The Phase 2 participants in the Preference for Hands-on Practice Training Theme appreciated the time they had to experience hands-on practice scenarios with sales techniques and computer programs.

Friendly Work Culture.

Another theme that emerged as a result of the qualitative questions was having a Friendly Work Culture. One respondent said, "I liked the interaction with other people."

Another stated that he or she liked, “Support.” Another respondent stated that one of the most helpful things about initial training was the “atmosphere.” These respondents valued the interaction that they had in the Initial Training Program with others.

More Time and Practice with Systems Software.

All of the response placed in the More Time and Practice with Systems Software came in response to question 15, which asks, what improvements each participant would suggest for the initial training program. One respondent identified, “COVERING SYSTEMS MORE.” Another response included specific work elements he or she would like more training, “OSCAR, boss/cars. How to read bills.” Another respondent stated that he or she would like to see, “an overview of the software prior to detailed training.” The responses in the More Time and Practice with Systems Software reflected a desire for more time and training on computer systems.

Phase 3

The Phase 3 participants included an initial training class taught by the same instructor who taught the Phase 2 participants. The Phase 3 training class had a population of 9 and had completed 4 months of employment at Qwest. This initial training class was asked to complete the same questionnaire completed by the Phase 2 participants. Of the population of 9 potential participants asked to participate in the questionnaire, a sample of 8 responded. Therefore, the response rate for Phase 3 participants was 89% of the potential population. The results for the Phase 3 participants are outlined below, along with a comparison with the results received from the Phase 2 participants.

In questions 1 through 11, participants responded to a Likert scale with 4 choices: #1 strongly agree, #2 is agree, #3 is disagree, and #4 is strongly disagree. The researcher assigned the correlating numbers to each response choice to assist in the calculation of the measures of central tendency. The mean, mode, median, standard deviation, and range were calculated for questions 1 through 11 and are shown in the Table 2. Each questions' responses will be individually studied below. Each Question is also compared with the Phase 2 results recorded prior.

Question 1.

Question 1 is, *The presentations used in Initial Training helped me relate to what I was learning.* As shown in Figure14 below, 4 (50%) of Phase 3 participants both *agree* and *strongly agree* with the statement that the presentations used in Initial Training helped me relate to what I was being taught. The mode of this bimodal response is 1.5. Thus, 100% of Phase 3 participants *agree* with question 1, (see Figure 14). The range for question one was therefore 1 to 2.

Comparison between Phase 2 and Phase 3 participants.

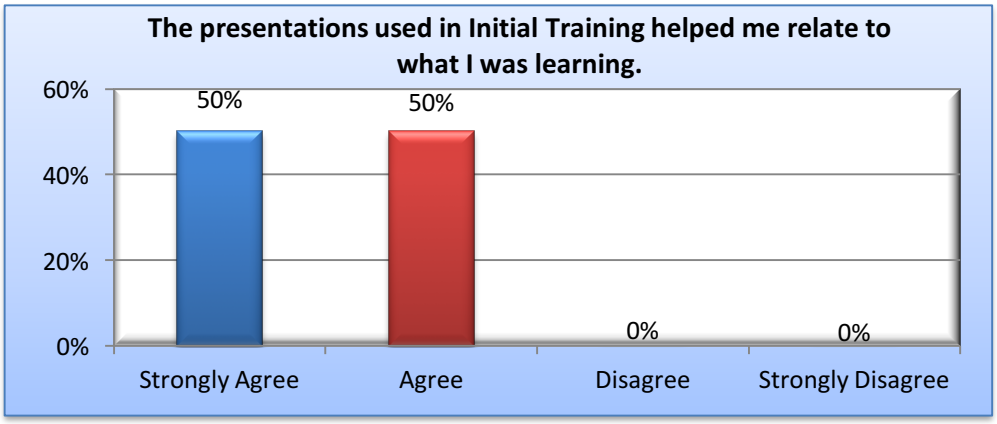


Figure 14. Phase 3 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 1.

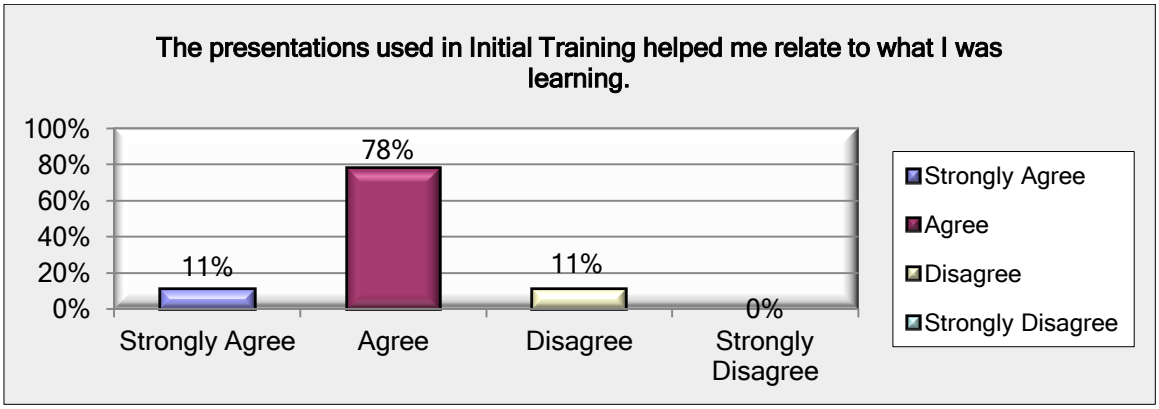


Figure 4. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 1 (repeated for convenience in comparing data).

There is a difference in question 1 between the Phase 2 and Phase 3 participants. While 100% of Phase 3 participants *agreed* that the presentations used in Initial Training helped them relate to what they were learning, only 89% of Phase 2 participants *agreed* with that same statement. While 4 (50%) of the Phase 3 participants *strongly agreed* with the statement in Question 1, only 1 (11%) of Phase 2 participants *strongly agreed* with the statement. The research indicates that the employees who have been with Qwest for over 16 weeks *agreed* more strongly that the presentations used in the initial training program helped them relate to what they were learning than did those employees who had been with the company only 11 weeks.

Question 2.

Question 2 is, *The curriculum (presentations and activities) in Initial Training helped me relate to what I was learning.* One of the Phase 3 participants skipped question 2, bringing the total participants for this question to 7 rather than 8. The questionnaire results indicated that

the mode for Phase 3 participants was 2 (*agree*). Four (57%) of Phase 3 participants *agree* that the curriculum (presentations and activities) in the initial training process helped them relate to what they were learning. The remaining 3 (43%) participants *strongly agreed* with the statement. The questionnaire results therefore indicated that 100% of Phase 3 participants *agree* that the curriculum in the initial training program helped them relate to what they were learning, (see Figure 15). The range for question 2 was also 1 to 2.

Comparison between Phase 2 and Phase 3 participants.

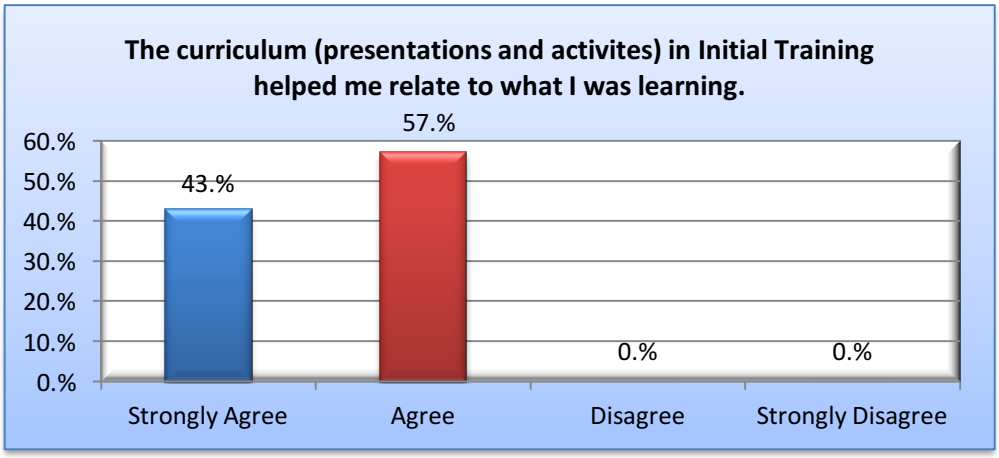


Figure 15. Phase 3 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 2.

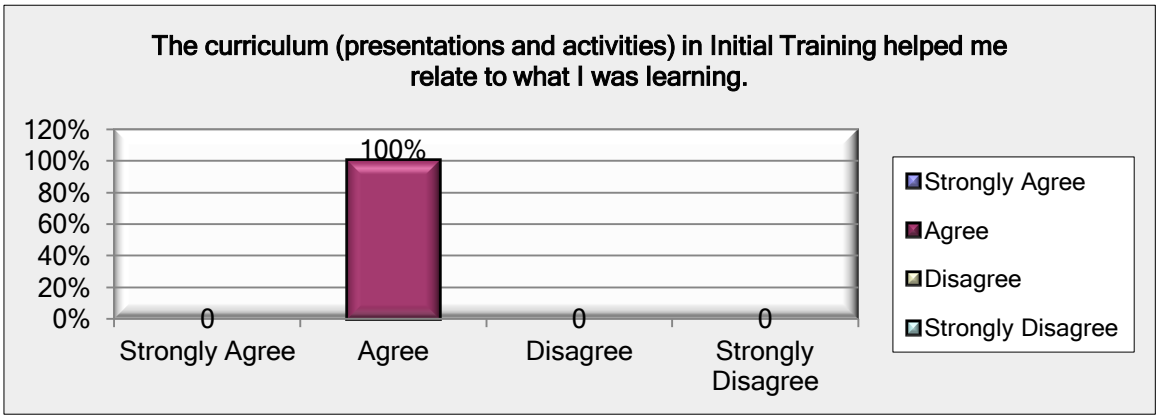


Figure 2. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 2 (repeated for convenience in comparing data).

The mode for both the Phase 3 and Phase 2 respondents was 2 (*agree*). Both Phases agreed 100% with question 2. However, the Phase 3 respondents also had 3 (43%) respond that they strongly agreed with the statement in question 2, while all 100% of Phase 2 participants only agreed with the statement. The research indicates that the employees who have been with Qwest longer again agreed more strongly that the curriculum (presentations and activities) in initial training helped them relate to what they were learning.

Question 3.

Question 3 is, *I know how the values, mission, and goals of Qwest relate to me as a sales consultant.* One of the Phase 3 participants skipped question 3 bringing the total participants for question 3 to 7 rather than 8. The mode for question 3 resulted in 1 (*strongly agree*). Five (71.4%) of the participants *strongly agreed* that they knew how the values, mission, and goals of Qwest relate to them as a sales consultant. One (14.3%) of the Phase 3 participants surveyed *agreed* with the statement found in question 3. Therefore, 85.7% of the Phase 3 participants *agreed* with the statement in question 3. One (14.3%) of the Phase 3 participants *disagreed*

with the statement that he or she knows how the values, mission, and goals of Qwest relate to him or as a sales consultant, (see Figure 16). The range for question three resulted in 1 to 3.

Comparison between Phase 2 and Phase 3 participants.

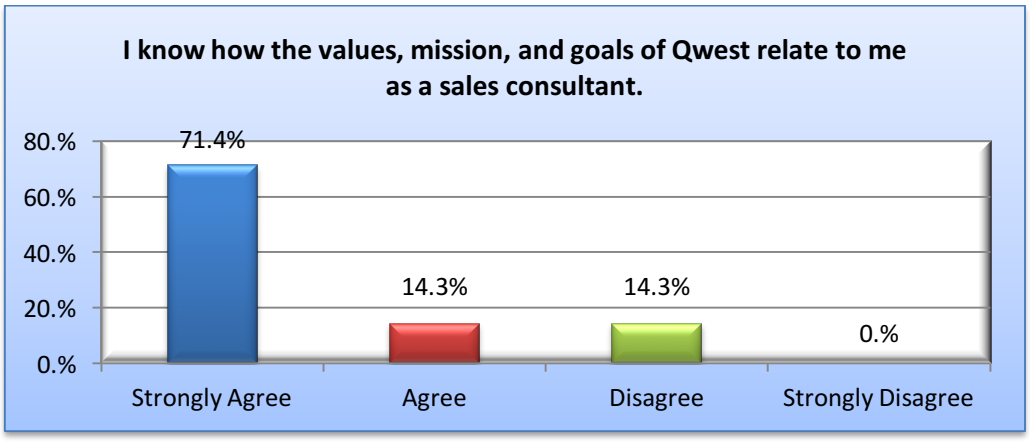


Figure 16. Phase 3 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 3.

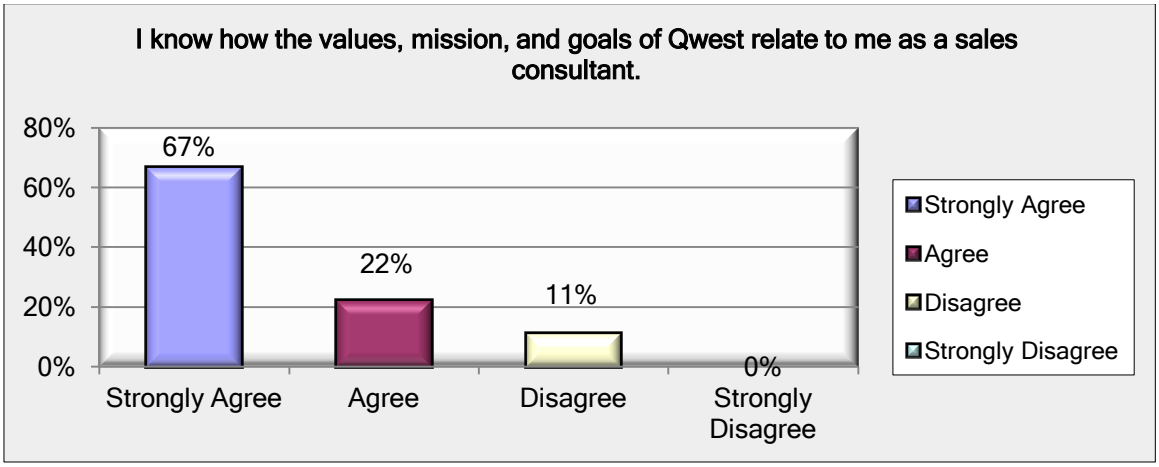


Figure 3. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 3 (repeated for convenience in comparing data).

The Phase 3 and Phase 2 participant responses for question 3 are very similar. Both have a mode of 1 (*strongly agree*) that is over 60%. Both Phases have one respondent disagreeing with the question. Both Phases also have a range of 1 to 3. The questionnaire results indicate that the Phase 3 and Phase 2 participants feel very similarly regarding their perception of how the values, mission, and goals of Qwest relate to them as sales consultants.

Question 4.

Question 4 is, *I feel confident in my sales abilities as a result of the sales techniques I learned in Initial Training.* The mode for question 4 resulted in 2, (*agree*). Seven (87.5%) of the Phase 3 participants surveyed *agreed* with the statement that they feel more confident in their sales abilities as a result of Initial Training. One (12.5%) *strongly agreed* with the statement found in question 4, (see Figure 17). All of the 8 (100%) of the participants in Phase 3 *agreed* that they feel more confident in their sales abilities as a result of the Initial Training Program, (see Figure 17). The range for question 4 was 1 to 2.

Comparison between Phase 2 and Phase 3 participants.

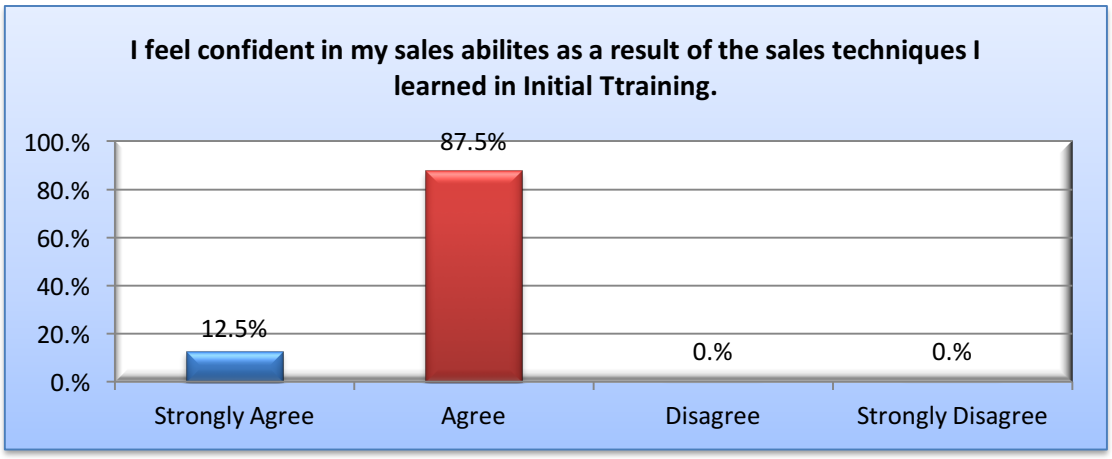


Figure 17. Phase 3 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 4.

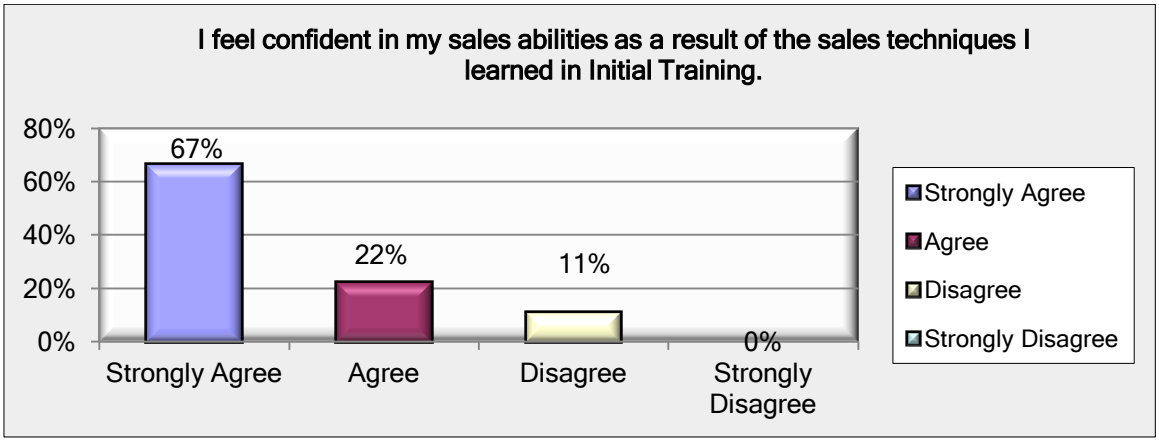


Figure 4. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 4 (repeated for convenience in comparing data).

In question 4, Phase 3 participants responded with a mode of 2 (*agree*), while Phase 2 participants responded with a mode of 1 (*strongly agree*.) The range for the Phase 2 participants was 1 to 3. The range for the Phase 3 participants was 1 to 2. The research indicates stronger sales confidence among the Phase 2 participants than among the Phase 3 participants, who have been on working for a longer period of time.

Question 5.

Question 5 is, *I received sufficient time to practice with the computer programs used by Qwest employees.* One of the Phase 3 participants skipped question 5 bringing the total participants to 7, rather than 8, on question 5. Three (43%) of the participants in Phase 3 *agreed,* and 3 (43%) also *disagreed* with the statement claiming that they had received sufficient time to practice with the computer programs used by Qwest Employees. Therefore, the mode for this question is the average of 3 (*disagree*) and 4 (*strongly disagree*), or 3.5 for

question 5. One (14%) of participants *strongly agreed* with the statement in question 5, resulting in 57% *agreeing* and 43% *disagreeing* that sufficient time was provided for practice with the Qwest Computer Programs during the initial training process, (see Figure 18). The range was 1 to 3.

Comparison between Phase 2 and Phase 3 participants.

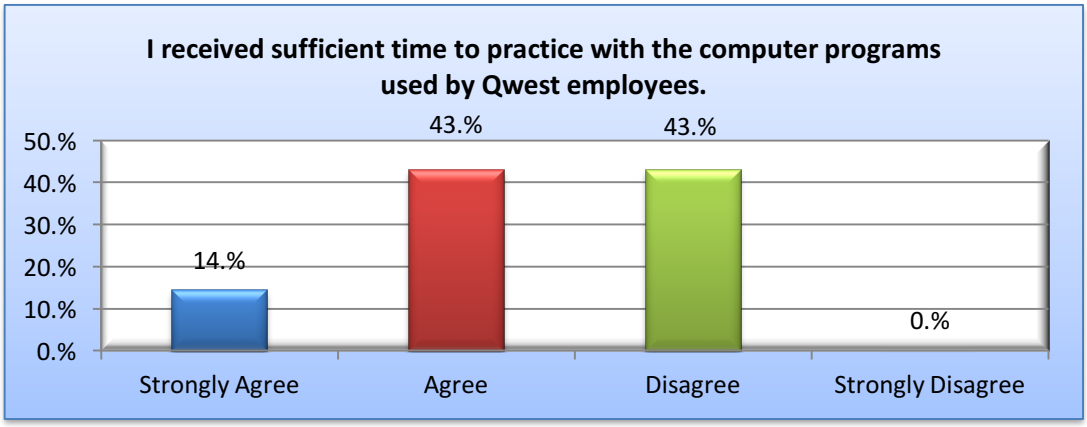


Figure 18. Phase 3 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 5.

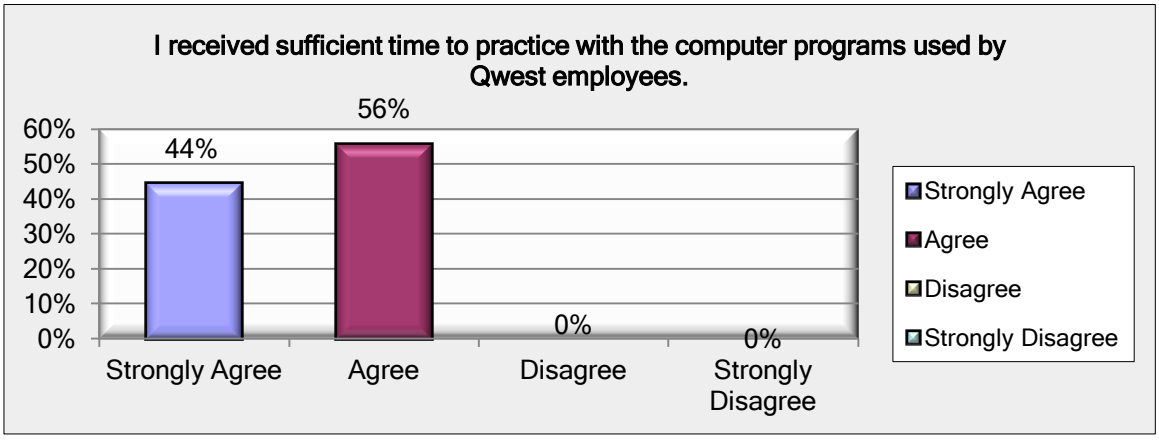


Figure 5. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 5 (repeated for convenience in comparing data).

There is a large difference in the Phase 3 and the Phase 2 participants regarding the statement contained in Question 5. The mode for Phase 3 is 2.5 (between *agree* and *disagree*) and the mode for Phase 2 is 2 (*agree*). The mean for Phase 3 is 2.3 while the mean for Phase 2 is 1.5. Three (43%) of the Phase 3 participants *disagreed* with the statement that they had received sufficient time to practice with the computer programs used by Qwest Employees, while none (0%) of the Phase 2 respondents *disagreed* with the statement. One (14%) of Phase 3 participants *strongly agreed* that they had received sufficient time to practice with the computer programs used by Qwest Employees, while 4 (44%) of Phase 2 participants *strongly agree* with the statement.

The research indicates that almost half the employees who have been with Qwest for 16 weeks reported that they needed more time to practice with the computer programs, while those employees just graduating at their 11 week mark, reported that they had received sufficient time.

Question 6.

Question 6 is, *I feel confident in processing orders through Q20.* One of the Phase 3 participants skipped question 6, bringing the total participants in question 6 to 7 rather than 8. The mode for question 6 with the Phase 3 participants was 1 (*strongly agree*). Four (57%) of Phase 3 participants *strongly agreed* that they feel confident in processing orders through Q20. Three (43%) of Phase 3 participants *agree* with the statement, resulting in 100% of Phase 3 Participants *agreeing* with the statement contained in Question 6, (see Figure 19). The range for question 6 was 1 to 2.

Comparison between Phase 2 and Phase 3 participants.

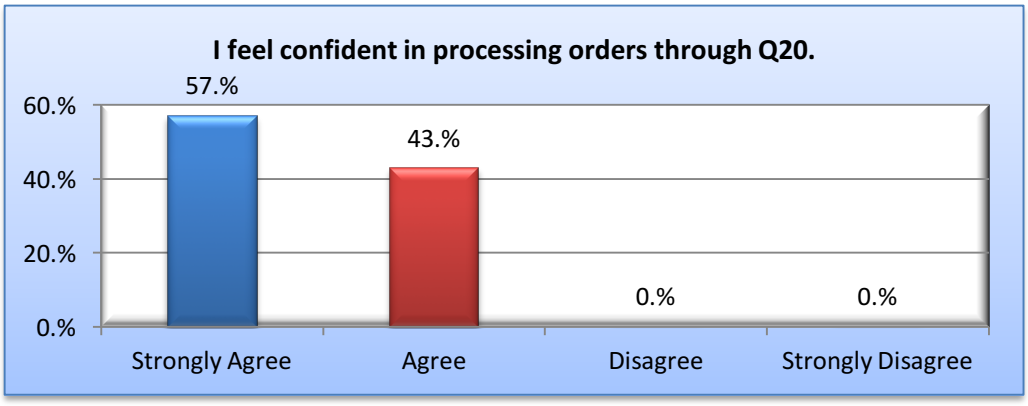


Figure 19. Phase 3 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 6.

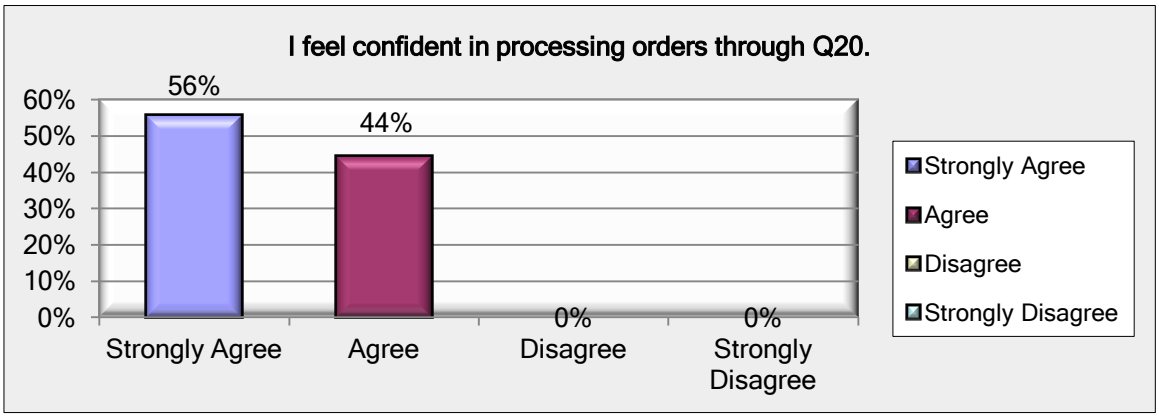


Figure 6. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 6 (repeated for convenience in comparing data).

The Phase 3 and Phase 2 participants responded virtually identically to question 6. The research therefore indicates that 100% of both Phase 3 and Phase 2 *agree* that they feel confident in processing orders through Q20, and over 55% of both Phases also *strongly agree* with the statement.

Question 7.

Question 7 is, *I feel confident reading orders in OSCAR.* One of the Phase 3 participants skipped question 7 bringing the total participants in question 7 to 7 rather than 8. The mode for the Phase 3 participants on question 7 was 3 (disagree). Four (57%) of the respondents surveyed *disagreed* with the statement proclaiming their confidence in reading orders in OSCAR. Three (43%) indicated that they did *agree* that they felt confident in reading orders in OSCAR, (see Figure 20). The range in question 7 was 2 to 3.

Comparison between Phase 2 and Phase 3 participants.

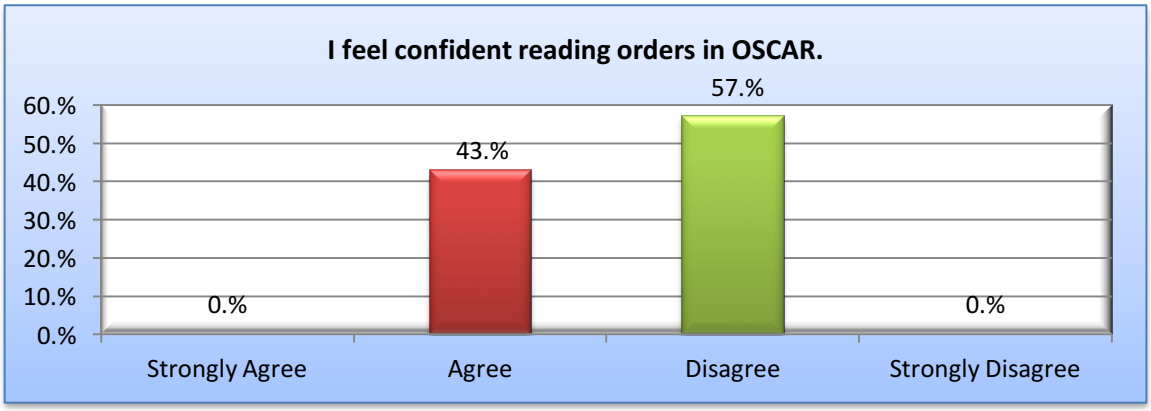


Figure 20. Phase 3 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 7.

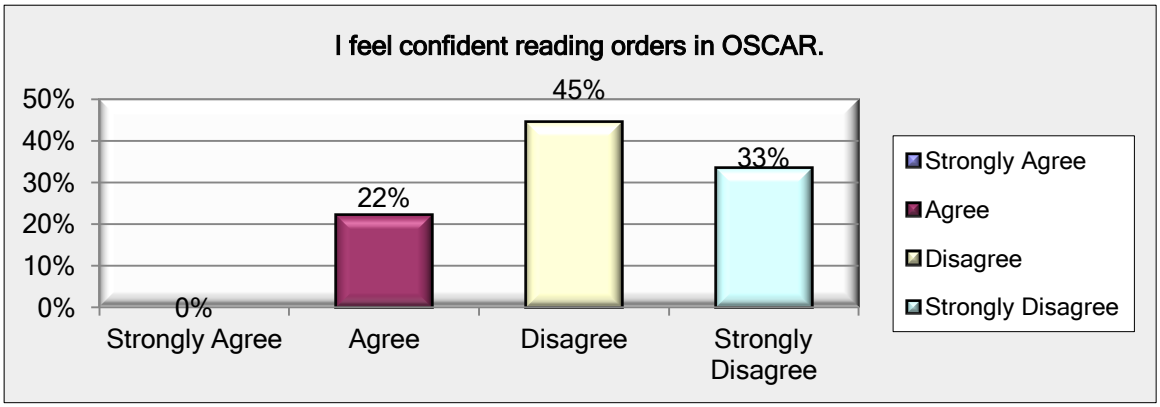


Figure 7. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 7 (repeated for convenience in comparing data).

There is a large difference between the Phase 3 and Phase 2 responses to question 7. Phase 3 participants were almost split in their opinions about their confidence level in reading orders in OSCAR: 43% *agreed* and 57% *disagreed* with the statement. In the Phase 2 responses to question 7, only 2 (22%) of questionnaire respondents *agreed* with the statement, while 7 (78%) *disagreed* and 3 (33%) of those respondents *strongly disagreed* with the statement.

The research indicates that the Qwest Employees just graduating from initial training felt less confident in their abilities in reading orders in OSCAR than those employees who have been with Qwest for a longer period of time.

Question 8.

Question 8 is, *I feel confident in processing orders through ROMS*. The mode for question 8 among the Phase 3 participants was 2 (*agree*). Four (50%) of Phase 3 participants surveyed agreed that they feel confident in processing orders through ROMS and one (12.5%) even *strongly agreed* with the statement. Therefore, among the Phase 3 participants surveyed

62.5% agreed that they feel confident in processing orders through ROMS, while 3 (37.5%) *disagreed* with the statement, (see Figure 21). The range for question 3 resulted in 1 to 3.

Comparison between Phase 2 and Phase 3 participants.

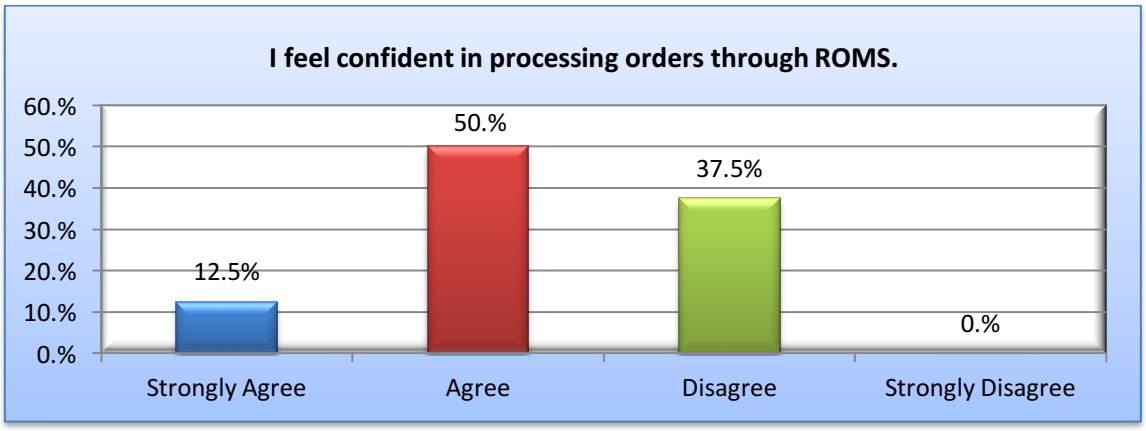


Figure 21. Phase 3 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 8.

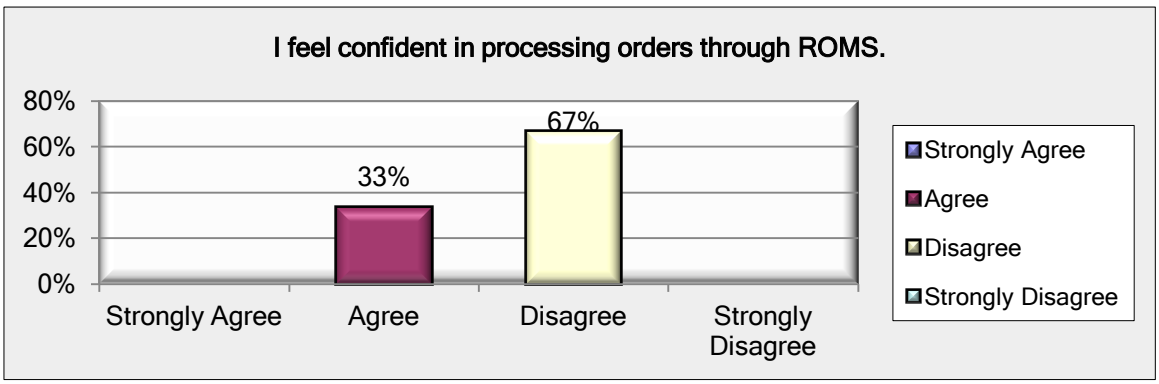


Figure 8. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 8 (repeated for convenience in comparing data).

The difference between the Phase 3 and Phase 2 participants in question 8 is similar to the difference found in question 7. The phase 3 participants were more confident in processing

orders through ROMS. Five (62.5%) of phase 3 participants *agreed* with the statement, while only 3 (33%) agreed with the statement among the Phase 2 participants. Three (37.5%) of the Phase 3 participants disagreed with the statement, while 6 (67%) of the Phase 2 participants disagreed with the statement that they felt confident in processing orders in ROMS. The range for Phase 3 participants was 1 to 3, while the range for the Phase 2 participants was 2 to 3 indicating a greater spread of opinion among the phase 3 participants. The research again indicates in question 8 that the Qwest employees just graduating from initial training felt less confident processing orders through ROMS than those employees who have been with Qwest for a longer period of time.

Question 9.

Question 9 is, *I know how to read an order in SOMS to assist me in helping my customers*. The greatest majority of responses to question 9 among the Phase 3 participants was *disagree*. The mode for question 9 among the Phase 3 participants was a 3 (*disagree*). Five (63%) of the respondents surveyed *disagreed* with the statement proclaiming their confidence in reading an order in SOMS to help assist their customers. Two (25%) more also *strongly disagreed* with the statement, thus 88% of Phase 3 respondents *disagreed* with the statement in question 9. One (12%) *strongly agreed* with the statement. Zero (0%) agreed with the statement, (see Figure 22). The range for question 9 resulted in 1 to 4.

Comparison between Phase 2 and Phase 3 participants.

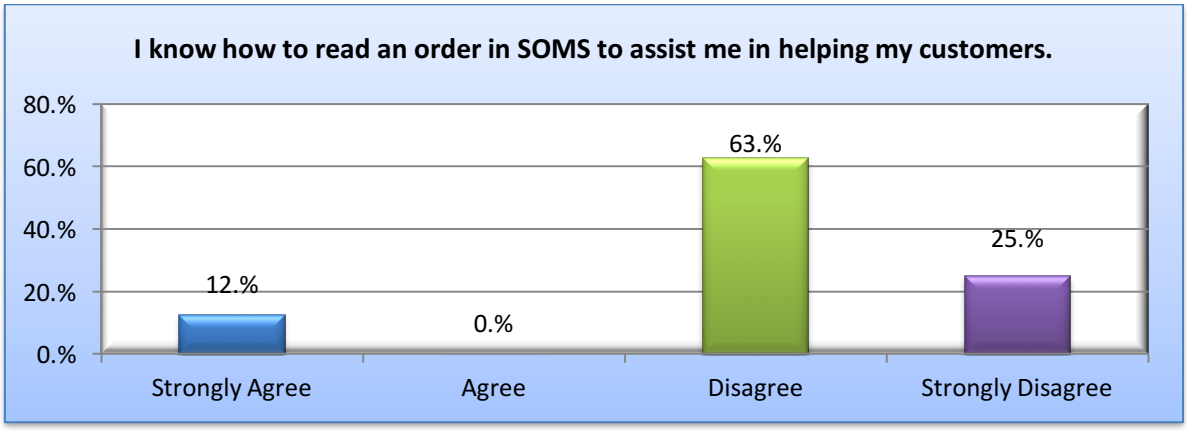


Figure 22. Phase 3 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 9.

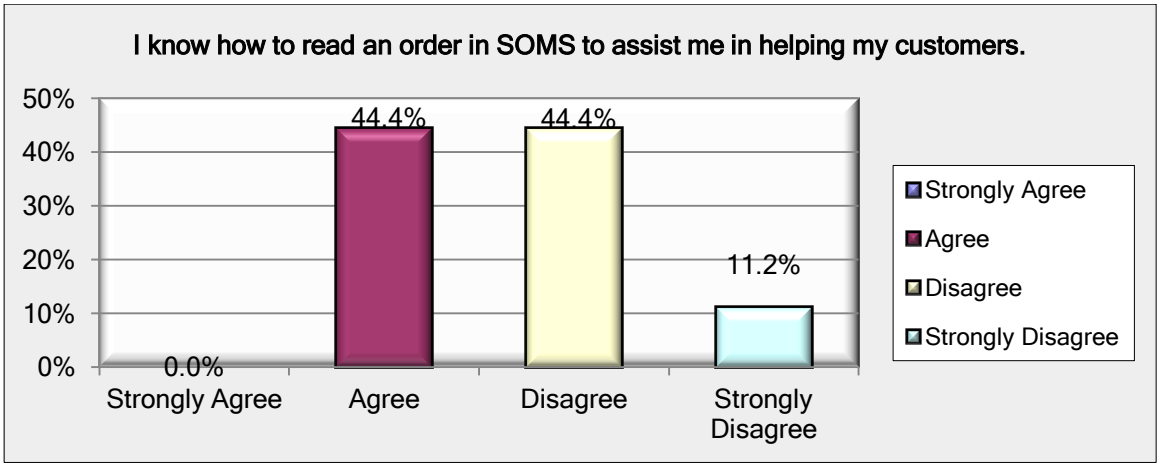


Figure 9. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 9 (repeated for convenience in comparing data).

The difference between the Phase 3 and Phase 2 participants in question 9 is greater than it was in the preceding two questions. The Phase 3 respondents more strongly *disagreed* with the statement proclaiming their confidence in reading an order in SOMS to help assist their customers, than did the Phase 2 participants. Five (63%) of Phase 3 participants *disagreed*

with the statement, while 4 (44.4%) of Phase 2 participants *disagreed* with the statement. Two (25%) of Phase 3 participants *strongly disagreed* with the statement that they knew how to use SOMS to assist their customers, while 1 (11.2%) of Phase 2 participants *strongly disagreed* with the statement. Zero (0%) of Phase 3 participants agreed with question 9, but 4 (44.4%) of Phase 2 participants agreed with the statement. The range for Phase 3 participants resulted in 1 to 4 and the range for Phase 2 participants was 2 to 4, thus a greater spread of opinion appears among the Phase 3 participants. The research indicates that the Qwest Employees who have been with Qwest for a longer period of time seem to perceive themselves as less confident using SOMS to help their customers than do the employees who just graduated.

Question 10.

Question 10 is, *I know when Facility Check can be a tool for helping customers*. The mode for question 10 among the Phase 3 participants was 1 (*strongly agree*). Six (75%) of respondents *strongly agree* that they know when Facility Check can be a tool for helping customers. Two (25%) also *agree* with the statement, resulting in 100% of Phase 3 participants *agreeing* with the statement in question 10, and most of them strongly agreeing with it, (see Figure 23). The range for question 10 resulted in 1 to 2.

Comparison between Phase 2 and Phase 3 participants.

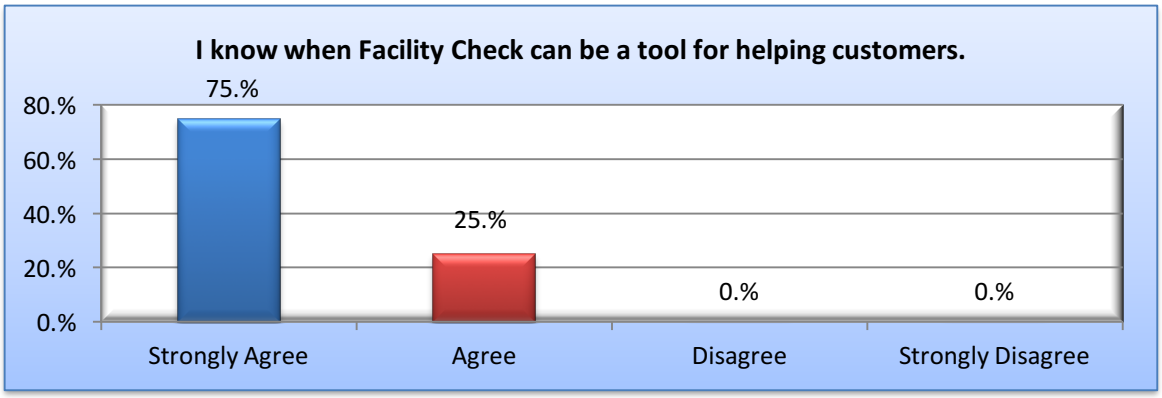


Figure 23. Phase 3 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 10.

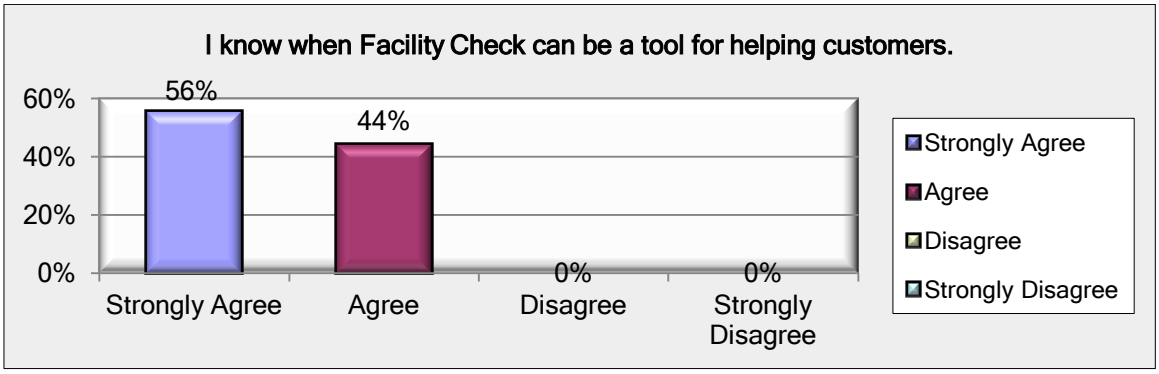


Figure 10. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 10 (repeated for convenience in comparing data).

The Phase 3 and Phase 2 responses to question 10 are similar. The mode in both Phases is 1 (*strongly agree*). The median for both Phases is also 1, with a mean for Phase 3 being 1.3 and the mean for Phase 2 being 1.4. Both Phases had had a range of 1to 2.

The research indicates that the employees who have been with Qwest for a longer period of time *agree slightly more strongly* with the statement that proclaims their competence in using Facility Check to assist their customers.

Question 11.

Question 11 is, *The initial training process I received at Qwest prepared me for my full time position*. The mode for the Phase 3 participants to question 11 is 2 (*agree*). Six (75%) of participants who responded to questionnaire question 11 *agreed* with the statement that they felt like the initial training process they received helped prepare them for their full time position. Two (25%) of respondents to the survey *strongly agreed* with the statement. Of the Phase 3 respondents, 100% *agreed* with the statement in question 11, (see Figure 24). The range for question 11 was 1 to 2.

Comparison between Phase 2 and Phase 3 participants.

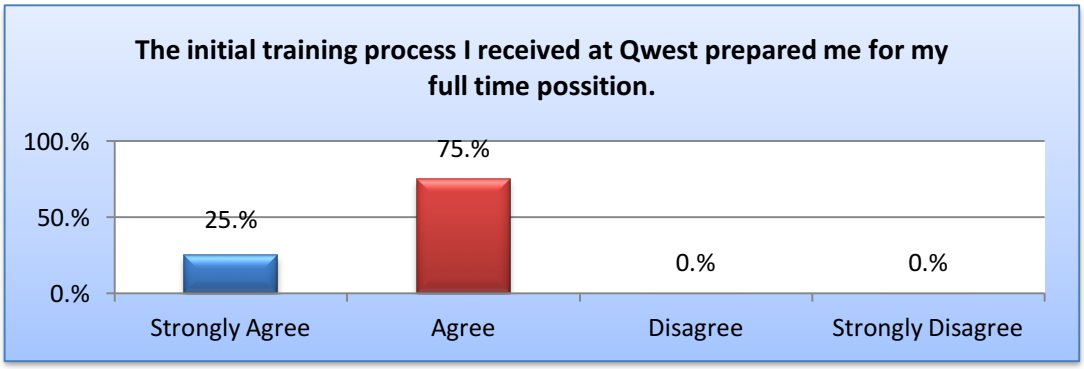


Figure 24. Phase 3 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 11.

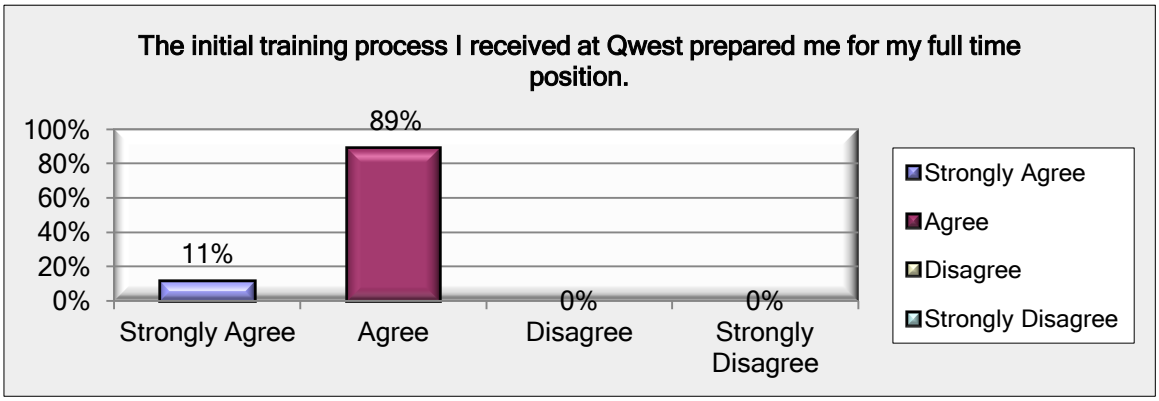


Figure 11. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 11 (repeated for convenience in comparing data).

The Phase 3 and Phase 2 participants of question 11 responded in a very similar nature. The mode for both phases was 2 (agree). The range for both Phase 3 and Phase 2 resulted in 1 to 2. The research indicates that the Qwest employees who have been with Qwest for a longer period of time agreed slightly more strongly with question 11 than did those employees who just graduated from the initial training process.

Summary of Phase 3 Data

Table 3

Mean, Mode, Median, Standard Deviation, and Range of Phase 3 participants responses to the Qwest Initial Training Survey

	Questions	Mean	Mode	Median	Stand. Dev.	Range
1	The presentations used in Initial Training helped me relate to what I was learning.	1.5	1	1.5	0.535	1 to 2
2	The curriculum (presentations and activites) in Initial Training helped me relate to what I was learning.	1.6	2	2	0.535	1 to 2
3	I know how the values, mission, and goals of Qwest relate to me as a sales consultant.	1.4	1	1	0.787	1 to 3
4	I feel confident in my sales abilites as a result of the sales techniques I learned in Initial Ttraining.	1.9	2	2	0.354	1 to 2
5	I received sufficient time to practice with the computer programs used by Qwest employees.	2.3	2	2	0.756	1 to 3
6	I feel confident in processing orders through Q20.	1.4	1	1	0.535	1 to 2
7	I feel confident reading orders in Oscar.	2.4	3	2	0.535	2 to 3
8	I feel confident in processing orders through ROMs.	2.3	2	2	0.707	1 to 3
9	I know how to read an order in SOMs to assist me in helping my customers.	3	3	3	0.926	1 to 4
10	I know when Facility Check can be a tool for helping customers.	1.3	1	1	0.463	1 to 2
11	The initial training process I received at Qwest prepared me for my full time possition.	1.8	2	2	0.463	1 to 2

The most common mode for the Phase 3 participants was 2 (*agree*), as opposed to 1 (*strongly agree*) found with the phase 2 participants. Five (45%) of the questionnaire questions for Phase 3 participants surveyed had a mode of 2 (*agree*). Four (36%) of the questionnaire questions had a mode of 1 (*Strongly agree*), and 2 (18%) had a mode of 3 (*disagree*). The total mean for all the Phase 3 respondents was 1.89, as compared with the Phase 2 respondents 1.97. The research indicates that the Qwest Employees who just graduated from initial training rated the initial training program *slightly more positive* than did the Qwest Employees who have been with the company 4 months.

Question 12.

Question 12 is, *I feel most confident in selling the following Qwest products*. For questions 12 through 15, respondents were typing into an open text box and were therefore were able to write as much or as little as they desired. The responses to question 12 have been graphed and can be seen in Figure 22 below. Seven (88%) of respondents stated that they felt *most confident* in selling Qwest High Speed Internet. Six (75%) stated that that they felt *most confident* in selling the Qwest Home Phone. Two (25%) felt that DirecTV was their *most confident* product to sell. Two respondents also voted for Qwest @Ease and Verizon Wireless, finishing up the remaining 25% of responses, (see Figure 25).

Comparison between Phase 2 and Phase 3 participants.

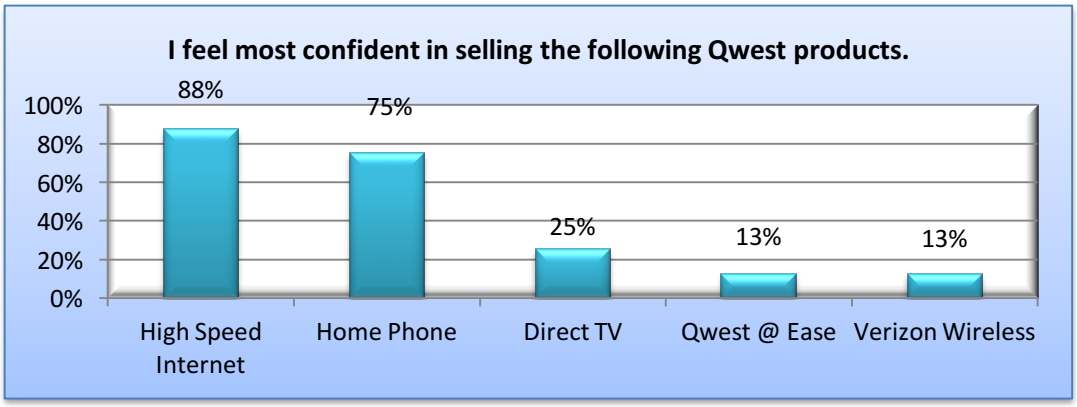


Figure 25. Phase 3 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 12.

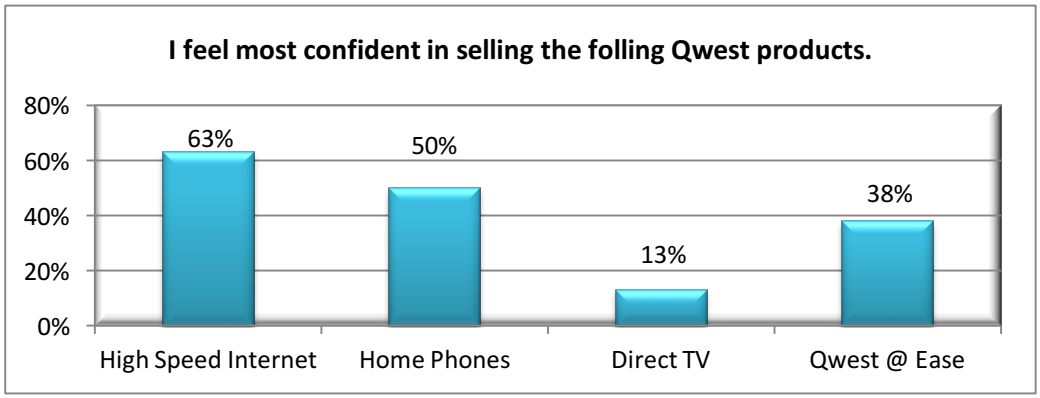


Figure 12. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 12 (repeated for convenience in comparing data).

The Phase 3 and Phase 2 responses to question 12 were very similar. The greatest majority (88% for Phase 3 and 63% for Phase 2) of respondents chose Qwest High Speed Internet as the product that they are most confident in selling, and Qwest Home Phones (75% of Phase 3 and 50% of Phase 2) respondents as the second product they are most confident in selling. Phase 3 respondents were slightly more favorable towards DirecTV with 2 (25%) responses as opposed to Phase 2 with only one (13%) DirecTV high confidence product choice.

The main difference between the two Phases was that 3 (38%) of the responses in Phase 2 reported confidence in selling Qwest @Ease while only 1 (13%) felt high confidence in selling that product in Phase 3.

The research indicates that the employees who just graduated from the initial training program and those employees who have been with the company over 4 months both feel confident in selling Qwest High Speed Internet and Home Phone service, while confidence levels in selling DirecTV, Qwest @Ease, and Verizon are much lower.

Question 13.

Question 13 is, *I feel least confident in selling the following Qwest products*. The responses received from the Phase 3 participants to this question have been visually graphed in Figure 23 below. Most of the responses received for the product that the participants felt least confident in selling was DirecTV, 4 (67%). Two (33%) of the responses were for Qwest Home Phones, and the remaining 33% was split between Qwest @Ease and Verizon Wireless, (see Figure 26).

Comparison between Phase 2 and Phase 3 participants.

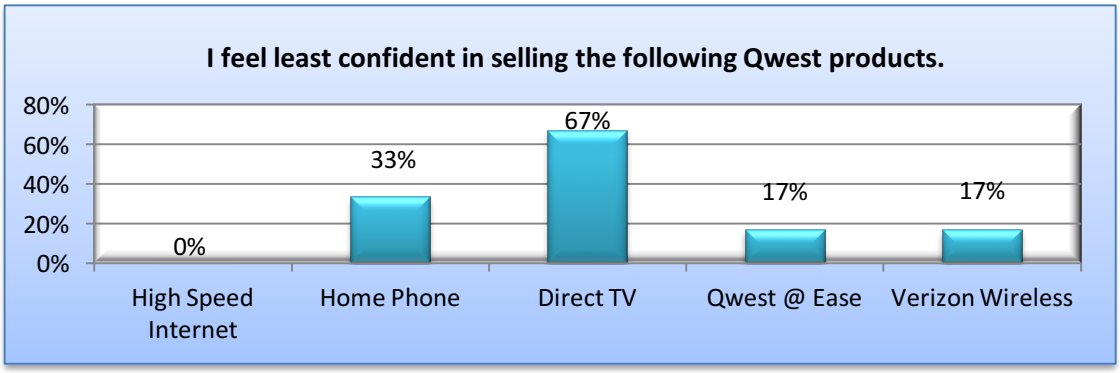


Figure 26. Phase 3 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 13.

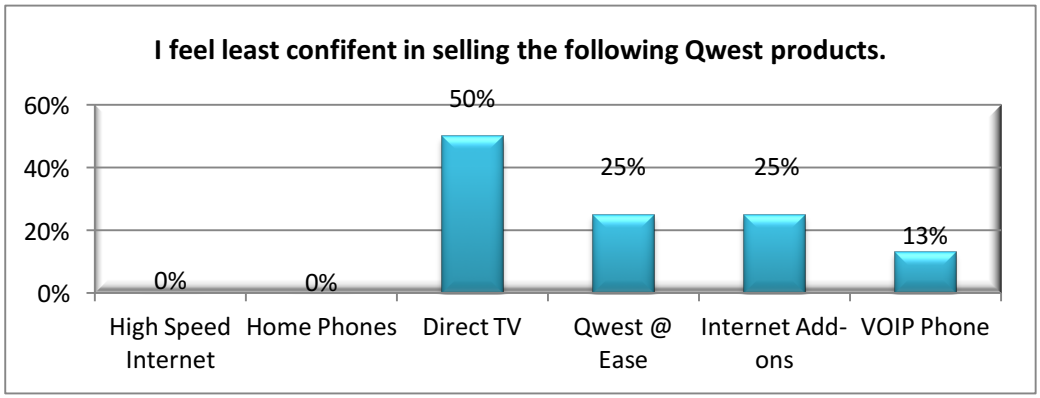


Figure 13. Phase 2 respondents' reaction to the statement presented in question 13 (repeated for convenience in comparing data).

The Phase 3 and Phase 2 responses to question 13 were similar. In both Phase 3 and Phase 2, the majority of responses (over 50%) indicated that they felt least confident in selling DirecTV. In both phases there was no vote for Qwest High Speed Internet.

The research indicates that Qwest Employees who just graduated from the initial training program, and those employees who have been with the company for over 4 months, feel least confident in selling DirecTV and many respondents also have low levels of confidence in selling home phone, Qwest @Ease, and internet add-ons.

Questions 14 and 15.

Question 14 is, w*hat did you consider most helpful about initial training?* Question 15 asks, w*hat improvements would you suggest for the initial training program?* Like the Phase 2 participants, the Phase 3 participants' responses to both questions overlapped. Therefore, the researcher analyzed and evaluated the data together. After reducing and categorizing the data, the following themes emerged: Preference for Hands-on Practice Training, Individual Coaching

Perceived as Pivotal to Training Success, and More Time and Practice with Systems Software. Each theme will be further discussed below followed by a comparison between the Phase 2 and Phase 3 participants.

Preference for Hands-on Practice Training.

The Preference for Hands-on Practice Training was created due to several respondents commenting on the need for more hands-on practice, while others considered the hands-on training they received as the most helpful aspect of initial training.

One respondent in this category stated that one of the improvements he or she would suggest to the initial training program would be more "hands-on training and not just listening to a long lecture." Other respondents identified that they appreciated the "hands-on practice," "scenarios," and "interactive learning" that took place during the initial training program. The Phase 3 participants whose responses were categorized in the Preference for Hands-on Practice Training Theme all appreciated, or had a desire for more, hands-on training.

Individual Coaching Perceived as Pivotal to Training Success.

The Individual Coaching Perceived as Pivotal to Training Success Theme was identified by many of the Phase 3 responses in both questions 14 and 15. Many individuals' responses indicated a desire for more peer coaching time, while others were appreciative of the peer coaching time they received in the initial training program. One participant stated that an improvement he or she would suggest for the initial training program would be, "More SME personnel if available to cover the allotted time so that there would be somebody available all

the time." Another said, "More individual attention. More assistance to the trainer to make this possible."

Other participants responded that the peer coaching they received was the most helpful aspect of the initial training program. One respondent stated, "Having SME personnel and the trainer was most helpful." Another identified that they appreciated, "talking with the coaches."

The Phase 3 participants whose responses were categorized under the Individual Coaching Perceived as Pivotal to Training Success Theme appreciated the interaction they had with coaches and SMEs in the initial training program.

More Time and Practice with Systems Software.

Most of the responses of the Phase 3 participants in the More Time and Practice with Systems Software identified areas where they would have appreciated more in depth training. One respondent stated that he or she would have liked more time "Covering systems like ROMS, SOMS and OSCAR more in depth." Another stated that trainers should spend more time "making sure that consultants know how to read and apply USOC's and FIDS correctly in any system." One respondent suggested that there needed to be "more time spent on the older programs, maybe scats also." Another stated that he or she would have liked "more ROMs, concession orders, and border-towns." One respondent reported that the most helpful aspect of the initial training process was learning how to use the computer system Qview.

Most of the Phase 3 participants whose responses were coded in the More Time and Practice with Systems Software Theme identified several areas where they felt that additional training would have been beneficial to them.

Comparison between Phase 2 and Phase 3 participants.

The Researcher identified the themes of: *Preference for Hands-on Practice Training*, *Individual Coaching Perceived as Pivotal to Training Success*, and *More Time and Practice with Systems Software* from the Phase 3 participants, and: *Preference for Hands-on Practice Training*, *Friendly Work Culture*, and *More Time and Practice with Systems Software* from the Phase 2 participants. The responses from both participants in both Phases were similar in that each Phase had several responses that fit well into the *Preference for Hands-on Practice Training* and *More Time and Practice with Systems Software*.

The main difference between the 2 Phases was found in the Phase 3 Theme of *Individual Coaching Perceived as Pivotal to Training Success* and the Phase 2 Theme of *Friendly Work Culture*. The Phase 3 participants in the Individual Coaching Perceived as Pivotal to Training Success Theme reported that having SMEs, coaches, and trainers available at all times helped the initial training program or could have helped the initial training program be more effective. The Phase 2 participants, who had just completed their training and had not yet applied that training, advanced the Friendly Work Culture Theme, mentioning that friendly interaction, support, and atmosphere were important to them.

Section V

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to conduct a training needs assessment for sales consultants as part of an efficiency evaluation of the initial training process at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho. This needs assessment provided the basis for a program review of the initial training process for sales consultants.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Are the expectations of the sales consultant role/position aligned with the organization's goals and objectives?
2. What, if any, revisions are recommended in the content of the initial training program for sales consultants at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho, in order to be aligned with the expectations of the sales consultant role/position?
3. What perceptions do sales consultant trainees at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho, have about their training experience regarding their satisfaction with instructional methods, and their levels of confidence and perceived preparedness to perform the functions expected as a sales consultant?
4. What perceptions do sales consultants (in their fourth month of employment at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho) have about their training experience regarding instructional methods and subsequent levels of preparedness to fulfill the expectations as a sales consultant?

Phase 1 Conclusions

Phase 1 of this project included research question number 1. This Phase was necessary to determine whether the expectations of the sales consultant position are aligned with the organization's goals and objectives.

Research question number one was answered in the affirmative through a side-by-side comparison of the Qwest goals and objectives with the expectations of the Sales Consultant role/position (see Table 1). The goals and objectives of Qwest are focused on providing Qwest's customers with what they need; Qwest employees are to accomplish this by working as a team (Qwest, 2009). The objectives of the sales consultant role are focused on perfecting the customer experience through finding and meeting the customer's needs on every call (Qwest, 2010). The goals and expectations of Qwest Communications appear to align well with the expectations of the Sales Consultant position.

Phase 2 Conclusions

The Second Phase of this project addressed research question 3. The question addressed was: What perceptions do sales consultant trainees at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho, have about their training experience regarding their satisfaction with instructional methods, and their levels of confidence and perceived preparedness to perform the functions expected as a sales consultant? The Qwest Initial Training Survey was conducted to address research question 3, as well as research question 4.

Overall reaction to Qwest Initial Training Program.

The most common response across all questions of the Qwest Initial Training Survey among Phase 2 participants was 1 (*strongly agree*). The research indicates that the majority of questions about the initial training program were answered in a positive manner, thus the participants reacted positively to the training.

Question 11 was also designed to measure the reaction of the participants to the overall training program. Question 11 States, *The initial training process I received at Qwest prepared me for my full time position.* In response to this Question, Phase 2 participants responded by *agreeing* 100% with one respondent *agreeing strongly* with the statement. The research therefore indicates that the Phase 2 participants perceived themselves to be prepared for their Qwest positions as full-time Sales Consultants.

Perceived levels of confidence.

Questions 6 through 10 and questions 12 and 13 were designed by the researcher to measure the perceived levels of confidence the Phase 2 participants have as a result of the initial training program in regards to computer systems and products used and sold by Qwest sales consultants on a regular basis.

Questions 6 through 10 focus on the respondents perceived levels of confidence in using many of the main computer systems used by a Qwest Sales Consultant on a regular basis. Questions 12 and 13 focus on the attitudes Phase 2 participants, who just completed training to serve as Qwest Sales Consultants, have about their perceived levels of confidence in selling Qwest Products.

Questions 6 and 10 were responded to in a positive manner with the majority of Phase 2 respondents agreeing with the statement that they feel confident in using Q20 and Facility Check. Therefore, the research indicates that Phase 2 participants feel confident in using these systems.

Questions 7, 8, and 9 were responded to in a negative manner with the majority of participants disagreeing with the statement that they feel confident in using OSCAR, ROMS, and SOMS to assist their customers. The research indicates that the Phase 2 participants have a low level of confidence in using OSCAR, ROMS, and SOMS to assist their customers.

Questions 12 and 13 asked the participants who had just completed training to serve as sales consultants what they felt most and least confident in selling, respectively. Phase 2 participants felt most confident in selling high speed internet, home phones, and Qwest @Ease. The research indicates that Phase 2 participants had a high level of confidence in selling these products to their customers.

The Phase 2 participants felt least confident in selling DirecTV. Fifty percent of participants responded in this way. The research did not investigate the level of learning these participants attained regarding sales of DirecTV; however, it is possible that insufficient learning could have contributed to the participants' lower levels of confidence in selling DirecTV.

Phase 2 Summary

The Phase 2 participants' reaction to the initial training program was mostly positive, however, the questionnaire did point out a few areas of weakness relating to the perceived levels of confidence in using a few of the main computer systems used by Qwest Sales

Consultants. The research indicates that Phase 2 participants feel the need for additional training and time spent on OSCAR, ROMS, and SOMS. The research further indicated that 50% of sales consultants feel least confident in selling DirecTV, one of the main products offered by Qwest.

Phase 3 Conclusions

The Third Phase of this project addressed research question 4. Research question 4 asked, *What perceptions do sales consultants* (in their fourth month of employment at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho) *have about their training experience regarding instructional methods and subsequent levels of preparedness to fulfill the expectations as a sales consultant?*

The Phase 3 results were then compared to the Phase 2 results to determine whether differences exist between sales consultants who have had the opportunity to apply the content of the initial training program and those who have just completed the training.

Overall reaction to Qwest Initial Training Program.

The overall reaction to the Qwest Initial Training Program for the Phase 3 participants also resulted in a positive response by the greatest majority of the participants, but not at the same level as Phase 2 participants. The most common mode for the Phase 3 participants was 2 (agree), as opposed to 1 (strongly agree) found with the phase 2 participants. The total mean for all the Phase 3 respondents was 1.89, as opposed to the Phase 2 respondents 1.97.

The research indicates that the Qwest Employees who just graduated from initial training rated the initial training program slightly more positively than did the Qwest Employees who have been with the company 4 months.

Perceived levels of confidence.

Questions 6 through 10 ask the respondents their perceived levels of confidence in using many of the main computer systems used by Qwest Sales Consultants on a daily basis. Questions 12 and 13 focus on participants' perception of preparedness for using the product knowledge that is necessary for a sales consultant to effectively sell to and/or assist his or her customers on a daily basis.

Phase 3 participants, like Phase 2 participants, responded very positively to Questions 6 and 10. The majority of individuals agreed with the statement that they feel confident in using Q20 and Facility Check. Therefore, the research indicates that Phase 3 and Phase 2 participants have a high level of confidence in using these systems.

Unlike Phase 2 participants, Phase 3 participants did have a positive rating on question 8 which stated, *I feel confident in processing orders through ROMS*. Five (63%) of Phase 3 participants agreed with the statement, while 3 (38%) disagreed with the statement. The research indicates that 5 of the Phase 3 Participants did feel confident in processing orders through ROMS. It is the opinion of the researcher that this difference in perceptions between the Phase 2 and Phase 3 participants is largely due to the additional time that the Phase 3 participants had to learn ROMS, with help from coaches and peers, than did the Phase 2 participants.

The majority of Phase 3 participants, like Phase 2 participants, responded in a negative manner to questions 7 and 9. The majority of participants disagreed with the statement that they feel confident in using OSCAR and SOMS to assist their customers. The research therefore indicates that the Phase 3 participants still have low levels of confidence in using OSCAR and SOMS to assist their customers, even though they had been with Qwest for 4 months at the time of the survey.

Questions 12 and 13 were answered by Phase 3 participants in a very similar manner to the way in which Phase 2 participants responded. Questions 12 and 13 asked the sales consultant participants what products they felt most confident in selling, and also what products they felt least confident in selling. Like the Phase 2 participants, the Phase 3 participants felt most confident in selling high speed internet and home phones. The research indicates that Phase 3 and phase 2 participants had a high perceived level of confidence in selling these products to their customers.

The Phase 3 participants, like phase 2 participants, felt least confident in selling DirecTV. Sixty seven percent of Phase 3 participants responded in this way. As was stated before with the Phase 2 responses, the research did not investigate the level of learning attained by these participants regarding DirecTV; however, it is possible that a low level of learning could have contributed to their lower levels of confidence in selling DirecTV.

Phase 3 Summary

The Phase 3 participants' reaction to the initial training program was mostly positive, however, not as positive as the Phase 2 participants. The research indicates that the

participants who had the opportunity to implement the things which they learned in the initial training program rated the program slightly lower overall than did those participants who were just graduating. Phase 3 participants had been graduated from the initial training program for over a month at the time of the survey, yet the majority of these participants still did not feel confident in using OSCAR and SOMS. This fact may have contributed to the reason for Phase 3 participants rating the initial training program slightly lower than the Phase 2 participants.

Qualitative Themes Conclusions

The qualitative data obtained from the Qwest Initial Training Survey was also very beneficial to learning what the new Qwest Employees claimed worked well for them in initial training program, as well as what they suggested would be beneficial to add or change about the Qwest Initial Training Program. From the qualitative data, the researcher identified the themes of: Preference for Hands-on Practice Training, Individual Coaching Perceived as Pivotal to Training Success, Friendly Work Culture, and More Time and Practice with Systems Software. Every response recorded for questions 14 and 15 fit well into one of these categories. The main difference between the Phase 3 and Phase 2 responses was that several of the phase 3 respondents identified that they needed more, or appreciated the personal coaching time they did receive. This theme did not emerge from the Phase 2 data. The Phase 2 respondents identified a separate (not identified by Phase 3 participants) theme of Friendly Work Culture, by indicating that they appreciated the: atmosphere, interaction with others, and support that they received in the initial training program. This difference in responses could be due to the fact that the Phase 3 participants had been graduated from the initial training program for over

a month and the majority of them still did not feel confident in using SOMS and OSCAR. Many of the Phase 3 participants identified that they would appreciate more personal time with SMEs, the trainer, and coaches. Perhaps the Phase 3 participants felt that if they had more time with these individuals who know how to use these systems, then they too might be able to gain that competency from them.

Many participants from both Phases identified that they would like more hands-on training and the opportunity to spend more time working with the Qwest Computer Systems.

Recommendations

Research question 2 stated, *What, if any, revisions are recommended in the content of the initial training program for sales consultants at Qwest Communications in Idaho Falls, Idaho, in order to be aligned with the expectations of the sales consultant role/position?* Due to the perceived low levels of confidence found in OSCAR, ROMS, and SOMS, this researcher recommends that Qwest improve the current initial training program to focus more hands-on time, practice, and individualized coaching to the curriculum dealing with these three systems. It is to be noted that this recommendation originated with both the Phase 2 trainees and the Phase 3 Qwest Sales Consultants who have been Qwest employees for 4 months.

The research also indicated that over 50% of each phase both felt least confident in selling DirecTV. Incorporating more hands-on-training, practice, and individualized coaching on this product offered by Qwest may also increase the sales consultant's confidence in selling DirecTV.

The researcher further recommends that after the revision of the initial training process, Qwest should use the Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006) evaluation levels 2, 3, and 4, or another comparable evaluation method, to measure effects the revisions have on the organization.

Another recommendation is that Qwest should continue to administer the Qwest Initial Training Survey used in this research project to monitor the continued improvement of the Qwest Initial Training Program. The Qwest Initial Training Survey could also be used by Training Management to assist in the evaluation of Qwest Trainers.

This study could also be duplicated at other Qwest call centers all across the United States. It would be interesting to compare the results of the different call centers. If one call center is strong in one area, it could share what they are doing to help their sales consultant trainees retain the necessary information and perform at the desired level with the other call centers who are struggling. If a call center is low in a particular area it might seek advice from other call centers to determine how they can improve their results.

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APPENDICIES

APPENDIX A

Qwest Initial Training Survey

Qwest Initial Training Survey 2

1. Qwest Instructional Survey

Thank you for taking the time to complete the Qwest Initial Training Survey. This survey will help us evaluate how well we are doing in the Initial Training Process and what improvements can be made to help Qwest continue to be a strong company in the future.

1. The presentations used in Initial Training helped me relate to what I was learning.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

2. The curriculum (presentations and activities) in Initial Training helped me relate to what I was learning.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

3. I know how the values, mission, and goals of Qwest relate to me as a sales consultant.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

4. I feel confident in my sales abilities as a result of the sales techniques I learned in Initial Training.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Qwest Initial Training Survey 2

5. I received sufficient time to practice with the computer programs used by Qwest employees.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

6. I feel confident in processing orders through Q20.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

7. I feel confident reading orders in Oscar.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

8. I feel confident in processing orders through ROMs.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

9. I know how to read an order in SOMs to assist me in helping my customers.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Qwest Initial Training Survey 2

10. I know when Facility Check can be a tool for helping customers.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

11. The initial training process I received at Qwest prepared me for my full time position.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

12. I feel most confident in selling the following Qwest products.

13. I feel least confident in selling the following Qwest products.

14. What did you consider most helpful about initial training?

15. What improvements would you suggest for the initial training program?