



Short Line Safety Institute: Positive Perceptions of Leadership Development Training

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Summary

The Short Line Safety Institute (SLSI) offers a Leadership Development Training (LDT) for interested short line railroads. An assessment of the current training program allows SLSI to learn from its past participants and to continually make improvements to best serve short line and regional railroads across the United States. SLSI conducted an analysis of feedback surveys that were provided to participants in its Leadership Development Training. Participants provided mostly positive feedback about the training, and also provided SLSI with suggestions for improving the program.

Background

The Short Line Safety Institute (SLSI) is dedicated to the continuous improvement of safety and safety culture across all short line and regional railroads in the United States. In addition to conducting Safety Culture Assessments and Hazardous Materials Exercises and Training, SLSI also offers Leadership Development Training free of charge to interested railroads. The three-day training program involves various methods of learning including direct instruction, workbook activities, role playing, individual reflection, and group work. The goal of the training program is to provide participants with the knowledge and tools needed to be successful and safe leaders at their railroads.

Objectives

This paper presents summary information collected in feedback questionnaires from participants in SLSI's Leadership Development Training. Participants' responses suggest which aspects of the training program are helpful and effective, and which may have opportunities for improvement.

Methods

SLSI distributed an online link to a feedback survey to participants at the conclusion of each Leadership Development Training. This survey allowed participants to anonymously answer specific questions about their experience in the training program, as well as provide any comments or feedback in open-ended responses. Participants were thanked for their voluntary participation in the training as well as the feedback survey.

SLSI then analyzed data from the feedback surveys. Mean scores from the multiple choice questions were calculated, and open-ended responses were transcribed and "bottom up" line-by-

line content coded. This free form of coding allows codes to be generated from the data itself, providing insight into the topic that may not have been otherwise detected. General overall themes were then extracted from the content codes and summarized.

Results

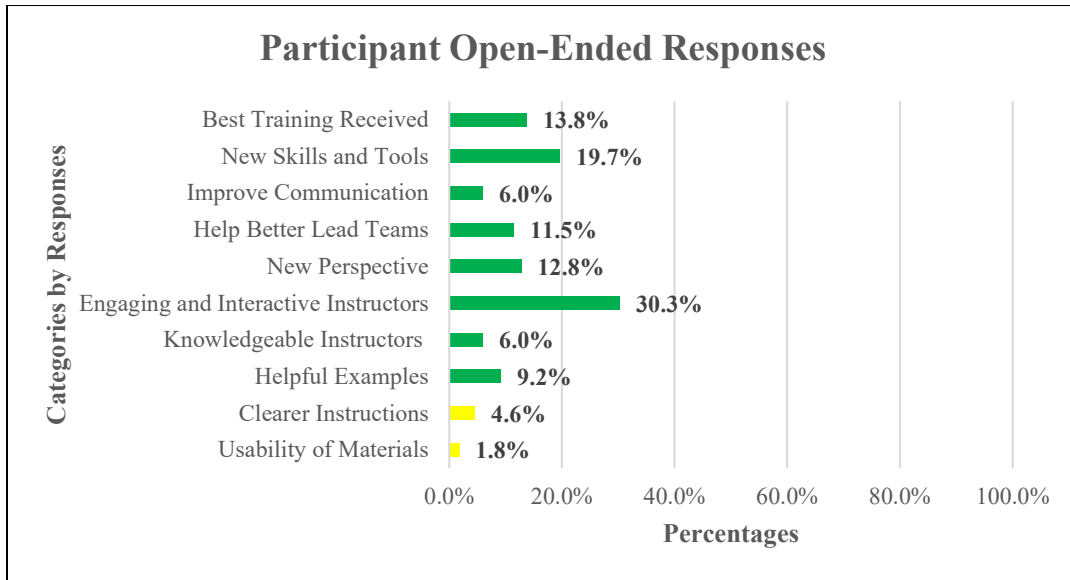
SLSI analyzed 218 surveys completed between October, 2019 and March, 2022. Survey questions covered a wide range of topics such as usefulness of the materials provided, effectiveness of instructors, and clarity of the presentations. Across all 218 feedback surveys, 99.5% of participants rated the program activities as valuable, 98.2% of participants rated the program as a worthwhile investment in their career development, and 97.7% of participants would recommend the program to a colleague in the railroad industry. These positive responses from participants suggests that the training program is indeed a valuable resource to short line and regional railroads.

Of the 218 participants that completed the feedback surveys, 100.0% of the participants responded to various open-ended questions asking them to provide additional feedback and comments on the training. General themes extracted from open-ended responses are displayed in Figure 1. Please note that percentages exceed 100% as some participants provided responses that included multiple themes, and many participants provided responses to multiple open-ended questions. Comments included learning new skills and tools (19.7%) and gaining a new perspective on leadership (12.8%). Participants also noted the instructors were very engaging and interactive (30.3%), knowledgeable (6.0%), and provided helpful examples throughout the training (9.2%). Participants also stated that this training was the best that they have received (13.8%) and the skills learned during the training will help them better lead their teams (11.5%), including improving their communication skills (6.0%). Opportunities for improvement include clearer instructions for group activities (4.6%) and ease of navigating the materials (1.8%).

Conclusions

SLSI's Leadership Development Training is perceived by past participants as a valuable and useful resource. The instructors are perceived as knowledgeable, engaging, interactive, and provide examples to the class. Overall, participants consistently rated the training program positively throughout the past three years. Opportunities to improve the training program include providing clearer instructions for group activities and improving the navigation/pagination of learning materials. Adjustments based on these considerations will help improve the overall quality of the Leadership Development Training and support SLSI's goal of continuous improvement of safety and safety culture across all short line and regional railroads in the United States.

Figure 1.



Note. N = 218. Percentages exceed 100% as some participants provided responses that included multiple themes. Green bars indicate “Findings” and yellow bars indicate “Opportunities for Improvement.”

About SLSI - The Short Line Safety Institute (SLSI) is a non-profit corporation that conducts Safety Culture Assessments, provides Hazardous Material Instructor and Leadership Development programs, and is the educational, training and research source for short line and regional railroads concerning safety culture. www.shortlinesafety.org, @shortlinesafety