



Research Paper

Study on the Internal Training of Employees in Apparel Retail Chain Enterprises: A Case of UNQ

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ABSTRACT: In the current trend of development, while enterprises strive to gain profits, they also face more challenges, making employee training particularly important. In the process of enterprise development, the capabilities of departmental personnel need to be continuously strengthened, and knowledge and skills require constant updating. Among these, the change and progress in the training system serve as an excellent model. This study takes the UNQ Guangzhou Victoria Store as the research subject and distributed 53 questionnaires through online channels based on five indicators: training needs (I), training content (II), training arrangement (III), training system (IV), and training outcomes (V). A total of 53 questionnaires were collected, achieving a 100% response rate, with 53 valid questionnaires, also indicating a 100% validity rate. Through data analysis, the strengths and weaknesses of employee training were identified to address specific practical issues, promote the functionality of employees, and ultimately enhance the economic and social benefits of the enterprise, thereby gaining a unique competitive advantage.

KEYWORDS: Employee training; UNIQLO (UNQ); Training satisfaction; Human resources

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I. INTRODUCTION

With the progress of society and the rapid development of the domestic market economy, Chinese enterprises must continuously enhance their competitiveness to adapt to the ever-changing socio-political and economic environment. To improve the competitiveness of enterprises, it is essential to cultivate the professional skills and professional quality of employees, providing a powerful driving force for enterprise development. Currently, the talent structure in Chinese enterprises is unreasonable, mainly manifested by the low level of domestic enterprise management and high talent mobility. Many small and medium-sized enterprises do not pay sufficient attention to employee training, and some domestic companies have low requirements for talent recruitment or, due to a lack of comprehensive training mechanisms and systems, experience a decline in core competitiveness, limited growth opportunities for employees, and issues such as employee turnover. In contrast, enterprises that can keep pace with the times, leveraging their own strengths and relevant theories to continuously improve their employee training systems, often succeed in retaining high-end technical talent. Therefore, whether viewed from the perspective of enterprise development or the personal development and career success of employees, employee training is a crucial and highly significant task that must be emphasized.

UNIQLO (UNQ) has been able to establish hundreds of physical stores in a short period, create its unique online business model, and continuously launch new business lines, much of which is attributed to its employee training. Its training model is well worth referencing. The cultivation of employees is a top priority for UNQ, which possesses a unique talent development philosophy aimed at shaping them into genuine international business operators, rather than just ordinary staff or managers. Today, through systematic training, UNQ enables its employees to provide customer satisfaction and meet their own career planning needs, rapidly growing into global retail elites. Therefore, an in-depth exploration of UNQ's talent cultivation approach provides other enterprises with scientific and reliable evidence and a reference for further targeted improvements in training efforts and continuous enhancement of employee management levels.

The objectives of this study are: (1) To address specific practical issues by analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of UNQ's training system, thereby promoting the functionality and improvement of employee roles and providing effective research insights for enterprise employee training. (2) To re-examine UNQ's training

situation, deeply analyze the company's internal employee training system, propose solutions to the shortcomings in employee training, and offer actionable employee training recommendations for enterprises to better adapt to market changes in the future.

II. CURRENT STATUS OF INTERNAL EMPLOYEE TRAINING

2.1 Research Object

This paper takes the UNIQLO Guangzhou Victoria Store, the largest in South China (UNQ), as the research object. Established in 1984, the company is a core brand under the Japanese Fast Retailing Group. With a focus on "Life Wear" basic apparel, its philosophy of producing clothing suitable for everyone to wear, emphasizing "fashion and comfort," is widely recognized. Its unique business model has successfully propelled it into the 2018 list of the world's top 500 brands, making it a commercial giant in the global casual clothing industry. It has earned high international acclaim and is known as the "light of Asian retail." Its development model serves as a reference for many enterprises. According to official website data, UNQ has over 2300 stores worldwide, with annual sales of 1 billion items. Considering the importance of UNQ's business within the group (Table 1), its vast scale and substantial sales volume make it a valuable case study for employee training models. Researching UNQ's training model can yield more reliable and practical conclusions to address specific practical issues. Since UNQ implements a unified internal employee training program, this study focuses solely on the Victoria branch (referred to as UNQ) as the scope of research (UNQ V, 2024).

Table 1 Fast Retailing Group Financial Report

Item	Revenue (Million JPY)	%
Japan	240,949	33.6
China	146,718	20.5
Asia and Oceania	110,323	15.4
North America and Europe	100,854	14.1
UNQ Business	598,846	83.6
GU Business	79,364	11.1
Global Brands Business	37,604	5.2
Others	577	0.1
Total	716,393	100.0

Source: Brandstar (2022)

2.2 Human Resource Overview

UNQ has a substantial market presence in China, with over 10,000 employees. These employees are incredibly valuable assets to the company and are an indispensable force in driving its growth, which underscores the company's emphasis on talent and employee training. To ensure that talent training reaches international standards and enhances corporate competitiveness, UNQ has made strategic decisions to expand its human resources, guaranteeing the opening of 100 new markets in China annually and an increase of 5,000 employees each year.

2.3 Employee Training Characteristics and Advantages

Comprehensive Talent Promotion: With the trend of globalization, UNQ has opened more and more markets in China. Initially, the company's offline store staff could be promoted to store managers through hard work. Later, with the implementation of the management reserve plan, the company began to seek store manager reserve cadres among university graduates, supporting their rapid development into outstanding operators within six months to a year. Although the company has several Japanese employees in China's electronic distribution industry, the talent promotion process prioritizes business development, thus viewing each employee with a fair and just perspective, tapping into their maximum potential, and avoiding the adverse consequences of racial discrimination.

Scientific Training System: UNQ has a specialized department for employee training. To become a regular employee, one must first undergo a three-month formal training program at "UNIQLO University." After successful completion of the training, qualified trainees are promoted to "Acting Store Managers," starting independent work, and eventually advancing to store managers, offering better career planning. According to the company's system, new employees undergo systematic training, implementation, guidance, retraining, and on-site implementation, followed by feedback from store managers. With itemized business evaluations by store managers, opportunities for participation are available every six months (Zhang, 2016).

Clear Training Objectives and Multiple Promotion Opportunities for Employees: UNQ views people as the best driving force for corporate development, therefore offering employees more choices for personal development. Pan Ning, President of the China region, has stated, "For employees, there are

opportunities to become store managers and continue to be promoted to flagship store managers, regional managers, senior regional managers, and even higher management levels. Every year, many store managers are assessed and move to work in other functional departments at the headquarters. With the acceleration of overseas market expansion, the demand for talent is also increasing, offering more job opportunities. This is highly attractive for employees with dreams of working overseas” (Zhang, 2016).

III. QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

The survey targeted employees currently employed at UNQ, and the questionnaire was released through Wenjuanxing on March 2, 2023, with a total of 53 responses collected. Upon review, all the questionnaires were found to be valid, achieving a usability rate of 100%.3.1 Survey Instrument Design

The questionnaire design of this study was constructed around an indicator system, which was developed by synthesizing the survey questionnaires on training satisfaction from relevant researchers including Mei Xiwen (2020), Zhou Jianbo and Ying Zhifang (2015), Yu Na (2019), and others. The content encompasses various aspects of employee satisfaction and provides an objective reflection of employees’ satisfaction with the company’s training programs. The questionnaire is divided into five primary indicators: Training Needs (I), Training Content (II), Training Arrangement (III), Training System (IV), and Training Outcomes (V) (see Table 2). The satisfaction scores for each indicator dimension can reflect the status of employee training at UNQ Company to some extent. Considering the comprehensibility and referential value of the questionnaire survey, this paper provides a detailed summary of the aforementioned primary indicators, each of which consists of 3-4 items for respondents to assign values.

Table 2 Themes of Employee Training Satisfaction Survey

Item	Sub Item	Code
Training Needs (I)	Understanding of training needs by the company before training	TN1
	Differentiation and emphasis of training content based on the needs of the trainees	TN2
	The company attaches great importance to employee training	TN3
Training Content (II)	The training content meets your job requirements	TC1
	The training content has practical significance	TC2
	The attractiveness, uniqueness, and innovation of the training content	TC3
	Emphasis on the thoughts and psychology of employees during training	TC4
Training Arrangement (III)	Satisfaction with the training agenda (including time, sequence, content)	TA1
	The training instructor has a strong professional level and ability	TA2
	The training environment is good, and the facilities are complete	TA3
	The training time is relaxed, and the intensity is normal	TA4
Training System (IV)	The company effectively promotes the system of employee training	TS1
	Satisfaction with the company's employee training system	TS2
	The company's training system is effectively implemented	TS3
Training Outcomes (V)	Satisfaction with the training instructor or follow-up guidance services after training	TR1
	Comparison of training outcomes with expectations	TR2
	The application of training in work	TR3
	Incentive mechanisms provided by the company after training completion	TR4

This study references the aforementioned survey questionnaire literature and materials, resulting in a questionnaire that is divided into two parts: (1) basic information and (2) employee satisfaction with training. The survey was conducted using Questionnaire Star, targeting current employees of UNQ as the primary subjects, yielding a total of 53 valid questionnaires. The evaluation criteria, based on the Likert scale, are categorized into five levels: “very dissatisfied,” “dissatisfied,” “neutral,” “satisfied,” and “very satisfied.” Respondents were asked to assign values of 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 based on their actual training experiences to rate their satisfaction. The higher the level of satisfaction, the higher the rating on the scale.

IV. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

The data from the basic information survey indicate (as shown in Table 3) that females (69.81%) outnumbered males (30.19%) in the survey participation. In terms of age, the highest proportions were in the 18-25 and 26-30 age groups, accounting for 33.96% and 37.74% respectively, suggesting that the surveyed subjects are predominantly young employees of UNQ Company, which aligns with the company’s focus on training talents within these age brackets. Regarding educational background, bachelor’s degree holders constituted the

largest group at 66.04%. In terms of monthly income levels, the distribution was relatively even, indicating variations in compensation and benefits. In terms of work experience, the largest group had 5-10 years, followed by the 1-5 years range, which generally corresponds to the age distribution characteristics. By job position, production staff had the highest representation, followed by administrative, sales, and management personnel, all of whom are priority targets for UNQ's training programs. Based on the content of this survey, the demographic characteristics of the respondents suggest a certain level of universality and representativeness, which can be considered broadly consistent with real-world conditions and the research requirements of this study. This allows for further analysis of training satisfaction.

Table 3 Analysis of Basic Information

Item	Indicator	Quantity	%
Gender	Male	16	30.19%
	Female	37	69.81%
Age	18-25	18	33.96%
	26-30	20	37.74%
	31-40	14	26.42%
	41-50	1	1.89%
	Over 50	0	0%
Education	Junior High	0	0%
	Senior High	3	5.66%
	College Junior	12	22.64%
	Bachelor's	35	66.04%
	Master's & above	3	5.66%
Monthly Income/ yuan	Below 2000	5	9.43%
	2000 -3000	14	26.42%
	3000 -4000	12	22.64%
	4000 -5000	11	20.75%
	Above 5000	11	20.75%
Work Experience /year	Less 1	12	22.64%
	1-5	16	30.19%
	5-10	18	33.96%
	More 10	7	13.21%
Position /Staff	Sales	8	15.09%
	Production	16	30.19%
	Administrative	10	18.87%
	HRM	8	15.09%
	Management	8	15.09%
	Design	1	1.89%
	Other	2	3.77%

According to the data on the overall satisfaction with employee training (as Table 4), the overall satisfaction rate of UNQ's internal employee training reaches 61.32%, with 32.70% indicating a moderate satisfaction rate, and 5.97% of employees expressing complaints about the training. Although there is a relatively high overall satisfaction rate, the reasons for the dissatisfaction among some employees need to be further understood in order to improve training efficiency.

Table 4 Overall Satisfaction Rate

Satisfaction	Moderate	Complaint
61.32%	32.70%	5.97%

Based on the survey data of various satisfaction indicators in the second part, the average satisfaction score is 3.73. Therefore, any specific item within each indicator level that scores above 3.73 indicates a higher level of satisfaction (see Table 5). From the results of this questionnaire survey, all satisfaction indicators maintained a score of above 3. However, many specific items did not reach the average score. Hence, a detailed

analysis of the items scoring below the average is conducted to identify issues and propose reasonable improvement suggestions. For ease of reading, each specific item involved in this study is represented by codes such as TN1, TN2, TN3, etc.

Table 5 Satisfaction Scores for Each Indicator

Indicator	Question	Satisfaction Score	Score
I	TN1	3.94	3.73
	TN2	3.64	3.73
	TN3	3.79	3.73
II	TC1	3.79	3.73
	TC2	3.64	3.73
	TC3	3.68	3.73
	TC4	3.74	3.73
IV	TA1	3.81	3.73
	TA2	3.70	3.73
	TA3	3.87	3.73
	TA4	3.66	3.73
III	TS1	3.87	3.73
	TS2	3.53	3.73
	TS3	3.74	3.73
V	TR1	3.66	3.73
	TR2	3.60	3.73
	TR3	3.74	3.73
	TR4	3.79	3.73

Training Needs (I): For item TN1, the satisfaction score is 3.64, indicating that there is room for improvement in satisfaction levels. It can be observed that despite the company’s high regard for training, the lack of precision in the training methods and the target participants can lead to reduced satisfaction, which in turn affects the effectiveness of the training. The failure to integrate theoretical education, core job responsibilities, and the specific needs of the trainees can result in a disconnect between the training and the employees’ expectations, leading to disappointment due to the training’s inefficiency. According to expectation theory, if the company does not align training with employee needs, consider their personal abilities, and address their material and psychological needs, it may lead to a waste of resources during the training process.

Training Content (II): For item TC2, the satisfaction score is 3.64, reflecting a lack of overall planning in the training, which makes it difficult to apply the knowledge flexibly once the training is completed. For item TC3, the satisfaction score is 3.68, indicating a lack of uniqueness and innovation in the training content, which fails to engage the employees. Many current training programs (II) are too similar, often neglecting the individual needs of employees. According to the two-factor theory, if measures to motivate employees to actively participate in their work are not taken, it can also affect their satisfaction. If (II) does not continuously update based on job requirements and the needs of the trainees, it will fail to stimulate employee interest, leading to a decrease in satisfaction.

Training Arrangement (III): For item TA2, the satisfaction score is 3.70, showing that the professionalism of the trainers influences employee satisfaction to some extent. Given the varying learning capabilities of employees and the scarcity of trainers with extensive knowledge and technical skills, there is a new requirement for the competence of trainers. The selection of trainers by the company is also crucial; although it may increase costs, a higher level of professionalism in trainers can help achieve better training outcomes and thereby improve satisfaction. For item TA4, the satisfaction score is 3.66, indicating that the training time is tight, and the intensity of the training increases to achieve high benefits in a short period, which inadvertently adds pressure to employees and leads to complaints.

Training System (IV): For item TS2, the satisfaction score is 3.53, the lowest score in the entire survey. Employee dissatisfaction with (IV) suggests that there are deficiencies in the system itself, which can lead to resistance to training. Improving and continuously enriching (IV) with the development of the times is of paramount importance for employee training in every company.

Training Outcomes (V): For item TR1, the satisfaction score is 3.66, indicating that the follow-up to the training is not effective, and there is a need for improvement in the handling of (V). More emphasis should be placed on evaluating the effectiveness of the training and providing employees with more positive

evaluations and feedback services, which can also help improve work performance after the training. For item TR2, the satisfaction score is 3.60, suggesting that the training outcomes do not fully meet expectations. According to adult learning theory, participants expect to achieve certain learning objectives through training, to address their shortcomings, and to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for better job performance in the future. When the training outcomes do not meet expectations, it can lead to a decrease in employee satisfaction and a loss of confidence in the training.

In summary, overall, the internal employee training at UNQ is relatively comprehensive and systematic; however, certain indicators reveal existing deficiencies that require targeted improvements.

V. ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS IN EMPLOYEE TRAINING

Based on the satisfaction scores below the average in the questionnaire (Table 5), the following sections summarize the issues identified in employee training.

5.1 Issues in Employee Training

5.1.1 Lack of Targeting and Practicality in Training

UNQ's training is motivated by the goal of "becoming a store manager," focusing on cultivating "the talent the company wants" rather than understanding what kind of talent the employees aspire to be. Consequently, internal training often aims at producing store managers, neglecting the individual needs of the trainees. This lack of targeting fails to meet the personal career development needs of employees, leading to low enthusiasm for training and potentially wasted costs, as well as ineffective training cases.

5.1.2 Lack of Flexibility and Innovation in Training Methods Despite

UNQ's unique and innovative marketing model, this innovation has not been translated into the realm of employee training. The company is willing to invest time in continuous employee training due to the recognition of their positive impact on the company. However, the training methods follow a routine process, and promotion is determined solely by a training evaluation form upon completion. This rigid and unoriginal approach, which does not tailor training to the individual characteristics of employees, struggles to retain talent. To cultivate versatile employees, a greater emphasis on innovative training is necessary.

5.1.3 Insufficient Investment in Training Instructors

The lack of training instructors is a significant factor affecting training quality. Most of UNQ's trainers are senior employees within the company, and the pool of such talent is limited, constraining the selection of internal training instructors. The case at hand requires an investment in both internal and external training instructors to prevent a decrease in training efficiency and to ensure employee engagement.

5.1.4 Compact and Concentrated Training Schedule

UNQ expects employees to gain a comprehensive understanding within a short three-month training period, covering everything from corporate culture to business operations and sales skills. The intense short-term training with rich and complex content often leads to information overload, resulting in vague impressions and confusion among many employees.

The inability to grasp the information timely results in diminished effectiveness. Even when employees successfully learn and grasp the training knowledge, the pressure due to the compact schedule and intensity can prevent them from achieving near-perfect work performance.

5.1.5 Outdated Training System (IV)

UNQ's (IV) is limited to the training itself, and employees find it unsatisfactory. The company has not updated its approach, and it rarely adjusts based on (I), leading to a failure to achieve the expected returns on the substantial training investments and to effectively improve the training.

5.1.6 Poor Follow-up on Training

UNQ's training focuses more on the reaction level of evaluation, with a simple survey concluding the training, neglecting the summary and assessment of the training work. The lack of follow-up on training effectiveness means many trained employees fail to apply what they have learned in practice.

5.2 Solutions to Employee Training Issues

5.2.1 From the Company's Perspective

Improve the training mechanism and focus more on innovation: Training should not be merely a formality; instead, it should combine the company's needs with employee interests, conduct (I) analysis specific to the enterprise, and provide "customized" training for employees, continuously updating (IV) to retain top talent.

Combine short-term and long-term training: UNQ's intensive short-term training, which requires employees to absorb a large amount of complex information in a short time, can lead to mistakes due to some employees' inability to process it all. By effectively combining short-term and long-term training, employees

can continuously improve their work efficiency and further achieve corporate goals.

5.2.2 From the Training Institution's Perspective

Diversify training methods: With the development of the internet, training methods are varied. UNIQLO University can abandon the single teaching method and combine multiple new training methods to cultivate employees. According to the characteristics of adult learning theory, using real-world work cases can help employees learn faster and better, with tangible gains. Occasional training allows employees to process work information at a more relaxed pace, creating a comfortable training environment. Increase interactive learning, encourage discussion between employees and instructors, and foster a positive learning atmosphere. Add expansion training to help employees transform their learning, communicate, and develop adaptability.

Training should be targeted and forward-looking: The effectiveness of training hinges on whether it meets the needs of employees. With the advancement of society and globalization, the competition among enterprises necessitates a forward-looking approach to updating knowledge and skills and innovating (II) that benefits both the company and its employees. Training courses should consider organizational characteristics when formulating training strategies to maximize training value throughout the company.

Increase investment in training instructors to fully utilize training resources: To ensure the quality of employee training and improve satisfaction, UNQ should increase its investment in training funds and instructor resources, ensuring that every new employee receives the appropriate training, promoting high-quality talent

VI. CONCLUSION

In summary, employee training is an indispensable component of a company and is crucial for encouraging, attracting, and retaining talent. The focus of this study is the analysis of internal employee training. It is widely recognized that UNQ places great importance on employee training. By optimizing and improving its employee training programs, the company has enhanced the service provided to customers, leading to greater customer satisfaction and retention. This unique talent strategy has enabled UNQ to rapidly become an outstanding enterprise in the global retail industry. This paper reexamines the training situation through this case study, delves into an in-depth analysis of the internal employee training system, summarizes the characteristics and advantages of the training, develops a questionnaire for employee satisfaction surveys suitable for the company, Identifying Deficiencies in a Comprehensive and Professional Training System, and thereby concludes the issues with the training. Furthermore, it proposes targeted solutions and offers insights for training.

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