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Election Workers: Instructional & Technical Evaluations

Collier County, FL

Submitted by:

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“Election Workers: Instructional & Technical Evaluations”

Background

As in most jurisdictions across the United States there were many items that needed to be addressed prior to the 2008 election cycle. In Collier County, Florida we were tasked with implementing two different types of voting systems within 1 calendar year. We started in 2008 using a DRE for the Presidential Preference Primary and ended using an Optical Scanner for the Primary and General Elections. A large portion of a successful transition would rest on the shoulders of our dedicated election workers. With a relatively short period of time to make the conversion, the development and execution of a targeted training and staffing plan was crucial.

Plan

The initial objective in developing a targeted training and staffing program was to determine the technical skill set of our election worker pool. This allowed us to create an individual worker aptitude rating as well as an overall average for comparison. The next objective involved the development of a detailed survey of our election workers' instructional preferences. Like many other election offices we had prior training programs that have worked successfully but we wanted to be sure those practices reflected the preferences of our present day pool of election workers. This survey would serve as the reinforcement for current practices and the foundation to build future offerings. Overall by tailoring our training curriculum to a model that best matches our learners' profile we predicted increased participation, retention and execution.

Execution

We utilized two evaluation and research tools which aided in the construction of an individual learner profile and an overall election worker training model.

The Technical Aptitude Questionnaire (*reference: exhibit 1*) is a 10 question form that relies on the election workers to disclose their usage and self assess their ability with certain types of technology. Questions ranged from reporting their computer usage to their experience with portable electronic devices. In order to fine tune the questionnaire we utilized our election worker trainer pool as our first test group. These 40-50 individuals represented our experienced workers who have expressed an interest in assisting with the training classes. From that first test we were able to reword questions, establish a basic overall technical rating formula and create the beginning of a per question average. The next stage involved applying the questionnaire to each new election worker to assist in the selection of their starting position. The majority of new workers had their technical rating developed through our mandatory New Election Worker Orientation sessions. The final target group for the questionnaire was the main

pool of election workers consisting of about 1,300 people. This group was invited on a volunteer basis to attend a special orientation session conducted prior to the 2008 election cycle. The special orientation was created as an opportunity to view, experience and ask questions on the new equipment and procedures. Each worker who attended this special orientation completed the Technical Aptitude Questionnaire and the Instructional Preference Survey.

The Instructional Preference Survey (*reference: exhibit 2*) consisted of 9 questions asking participants to express their preferred way to learn. The questions addressed areas such as classroom size, depth and breadth of learning on equipment, utilization of resources and interest in future offerings.

Results

The Technical Aptitude Questionnaire was completed by over 65% of the election worker pool and continues to be utilized during each New Election Worker Orientation. The completed questionnaires were recorded and averaged by question (*reference: exhibit 3*) to display the overall technical ability of our current workers. That data was further compared to the position of the respondent to allow for an overall minimum technical rating per position. During the special orientation sessions we were able to develop a sample group of about 600 election workers who had filled out the Instructional Preference Survey. Those responses were compiled to reflect which methods and structures the participants favored (*reference: exhibit 4*).

Analysis

The implementation of a technical rating system added another facet to help guide our staffing decisions for position placement. While utilizing a self evaluation has its drawbacks we have found that most election workers were forthcoming with both their strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately, the technical rating only serves as one component to an ongoing complete election worker performance and review process. We have found this system typically works best for the initial placement of our new and inexperienced workers. A helpful byproduct of the technical rating system is the creation of a minimum standard by which we can write our training manuals, select relatable training examples, modify the speed of classes and determine how long to spend with new equipment.

The Instructional Preference Survey has been equally worth the time to assemble and review. The results have reinforced many of the offerings we currently use but also contributed to some modifications and exploration of future styles of training. For example the decision to maintain smaller class sizes was reinforced by the survey as well as the continued use of training manuals for reference. Several items that are being explored for future considerations are testing components and online training courses. Taking the time to learn more about your election workers and quantifying their preferences goes a long way into developing a targeted training program that exceeds everybody's expectations.

Election Worker Questionnaire

Thank you for your interest in becoming an election worker for the Collier County Supervisor of Elections. The following information will help us determine your abilities as it relates to election technology. Excelling or being unfamiliar with any one skill does not guarantee you a position, nor does it eliminate you from qualifying for an election worker position. Please be honest, it is okay if you are not experienced at any of the following, as training is provided for all positions.

Please select one answer that best matches your experience or usage

1. Please describe how often you use a computer (desktop or laptop):

- Everyday
- 3 or 4 times per week
- Once a week
- Less than once a week / Do not use

2. On average how often do you use a printer (laser, inkjet, etc)?

- Weekly
- Monthly
- Seldom / Do not use

3. On average how often do you check/send/receive E-mails?

- Everyday
- 3 or 4 times per week
- Once a week
- Less than once a week / Do not use

4. Do you have experience setting up a laptop computer?

- Yes
- No

5. How often do you use a touch screen computer/kiosk? (ex. ATM, airport check-in, etc.)

- Frequently (Daily / Weekly)
- Occasionally (6+ times a year)
- Seldom / Never

6. Please rate your Typing / Data Input skills.

- Excellent
- Very Good / Good
- Fair / Poor

7. Do you use the Internet to pay your bills or check account statements?

- Yes
- No

8. Are you able to use a device with small keys and display? (ex. cell phone, calculator, etc.)

- Yes
- No

9. Have you ever used a handheld data entry device? (ex. PDA / Blackberry)

- Yes
- No

10. Are you interested in learning how to use new election technology?

- Yes
- No

Election Worker Instructional Preferences Survey

The following information will help us assess your learning preferences. Please be honest as it will benefit how your future training sessions are structured

Name: (optional) _____

Last position held: _____

Please select the answer that best describes your preference:

I learn best by:

- Instructor led demonstrations and instructions with questions
- More individual hands-on and minimal presenting
- A combination of instructor led and individual hands-on
- Basic instructions and additional resources to review at home

I am most comfortable learning in a class size that is:

- A larger group (30+)
- A medium group (15 - 30)
- A smaller group (less than 15)
- Any size

When learning about new election equipment:

- I want to know everything: (Advanced functions/troubleshooting)
- I want to know enough to do my job and a little more just in case
- I want to know just enough to do my job on Election Day
- I would prefer not to work with new election equipment

Utilization of the Training Manual:

- I read it (several times) & used it as a reference tool
- I reviewed it briefly before the Election
- I didn't read the manual but I brought it for reference on Election Day
- I received a manual??

Testing / Additional Classes:

- We should be tested with only those passing being selected to work
- We should be tested just for our own review
- I would rather take an extra class for review instead of a test
- No testing or additional classes

Class Schedule / Election Preparation:

- The class schedule worked well, just enough info before the Election
- There was too much to learn in such a short time period; add another class or more time
- I felt rushed to learn before the Election; spread the classes out
- Too much time was spent on training

New Election Technology:

- New technology is making my job easier and less stressful
- Not too much has changed with the addition of new technology
- New technology is making my job more difficult and stressful
- I would rather not work with any new election technology

Are you interested in completing one of your required classes using an online training class? (i.e. Login to a website at your convenience, view the course and complete a comprehension assessment.)

- Yes
- No
- I'm interested but need more information

What tools would you most likely use to review for Election Day?

(Rank in order of 1st to 4th)

- _____ **Training Manual** (printed procedures, policies and examples)
- _____ **CD-ROM** (Electronic copy of the training manual and video demonstrations)
- _____ **DVD** (Video demonstrations and an overview of procedures and policies)
- _____ **Website** (Downloads of the training manual and review of key procedures)

Please make any additional comments on the back of this page. Thank you.

Election Worker Technical Aptitude Questionnaire - Results

1. Please describe how often you use a computer (desktop or laptop).

65.7%	Everyday
15.9%	3 or 4 times per week
6.6%	Once a week
11.8%	Less than once a week / Do not use

2. On average how often do you use a printer (laser, inkjet, etc)?

78.4%	Weekly
2.7%	Monthly
10.8%	Seldom
8.1%	Never / Do not use

3. On average how often do you check/send/receive E-mails?

62.1%	Everyday
18.8%	3 or 4 times per week
4.9%	Once a week
14.2%	Less than once a week / Do not use

4. Do you have experience setting up a laptop computer?

64.2%	Yes
35.8%	No

5. How often do you use a touch screen computer/kiosk? (ex. ATM)

50.1%	Frequently (Daily / Weekly)
16.8%	Occasionally (6+ times a year)
33.1%	Seldom / Never

6. Please rate your Data Entry / Typing skills.

20.7%	Excellent
22.8%	Very Good
26.5%	Good
30.0%	Fair / Poor

7. Do you use the Internet to pay your bills or check account statements?

48.7%	Yes
51.3%	No

8. Are you comfortable using a device with small keys and display screen?

85.4%	Yes
14.6%	No

9. Have you ever used a handheld data entry device? (ex. PDA / Blackberry)

21.9%	Yes
78.1%	No

10. Are you interested in learning how to use new election technology?

96.2%	Yes
3.8%	No

Election Worker Instructional Preferences Survey - Results

I learn best by:

9.8%	Instructor led demonstrations and instructions with questions
6.7%	More individual hands-on and minimal presenting
80.4%	A combination of instructor led and individual hands-on
3.1%	Basic instructions and additional resources to review at home

I am most comfortable learning in a class size that is:

0.5%	A larger group (30+)
16.7%	A medium group (15 - 30)
50.0%	A smaller group (less than 15)
32.8%	Any size

When learning about new election equipment:

43.8%	I want to know everything: (Advanced functions/troubleshooting)
50.4%	I want to know enough to do my job and a little more just in case
5.8%	I want to know just enough to do my job on Election Day
0.0%	I would prefer not to work on new election equipment

Utilization of the Training Manual:

58.5%	I read it (several times) & used it as a reference tool
30.6%	I reviewed it briefly before the Election
3.1%	I didn't read the manual but I brought for reference on Election Day
7.8%	I received a manual??

Testing / Additional Classes:

30.8%	We should be tested with only those passing being selected to work
33.9%	We should be tested just for our own review
28.4%	I would rather take an extra class for review instead of a test
6.9%	No testing or additional classes

Class Schedule / Election Preparation:

92.6%	Class schedule worked well, just enough information before the Election
5.6%	Too much to learn in such a short time period; add another class
0.7%	I felt rushed to learn before the Election; spread the classes out
1.1%	Too much time was spent on training

New Election Technology:

92.1%	New technology is making my job easier and less stressful
6.0%	Not too much has changed with the addition of technology
1.3%	New technology is making my job more difficult and stressful
0.6%	I would rather not work with any new election technology

Interested in taking an online training class:

51.6%	Yes
32.0%	No
16.4%	I'm interested but need more information

What tools would you most likely use to review for Election Day:

Training Manual	44.5%- Avg. Overall; (53.1% - 1 st Choice)
DVD	20.9%- Avg. Overall; (18.5% - 1 st Choice)
Website	18.6%- Avg. Overall; (16.0% - 1 st Choice)
CD-ROM	16.0%- Avg. Overall; (12.4% - 1 st Choice)