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PERSONNEL ADAPTATION MANAGEMENT DURING SEASONAL PEAKS: A MODEL OF ACCELERATED TRAINING AND WORKLOAD DISTRIBUTION IN LOGISTICS WITHOUT QUALITY DECLINE AND ERROR GROWTH

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Every November and December in logistics looks the same: orders triple, you hire whoever agrees to work, give them two days of training, throw them into the warehouse, and watch everything fall apart. Mistakes pile up, customers complain, supervisors burn out fixing errors. Everyone says: well, what can you do, it's peak season.

We have a different mindset. Train less but train better. Make them work immediately but in jobs they can perform. Do not give children complex tasks when they are not prepared. It sounds obvious but nobody does that. It works. One can expand a team two to three times with no deterioration of quality [1, 3, 6].

Honestly, it is when the peak season is in full swing, either during the holiday season or just before the New Year. The number of orders is now 2-3 times more than the usual one. The company hires all people who will consent on a temporary basis. These individuals are given an orientation that lasts a few days, in which someone talks to them about the processes, safety regulations, and quality standards. They are subsequently forced into the warehouse to work.

First week is complete chaos. Error rates hit 18-20%. Packages go to wrong addresses, items get damaged, orders are incomplete. Supervisors spend half their time fixing what new people messed up. Order processing slows down by a third because rookies take five times longer on every operation. Customer service drowns in complaints [2, 5].

Management sees this train wreck coming every single year and changes nothing. Why? Because they think the alternative is worse. If you spend a week on proper training, you lose productivity at the start of peak season. Better to tolerate mistakes than to stand idle.

That's where the whole problem sits: you need people immediately, but you need them not to destroy everything around them. Most companies have decided this contradiction can't be resolved. They're wrong.

Standard onboarding takes about a week. First day - they tell you about the company, show you where everything is, explain basic safety stuff. Second day - walk you around the warehouse, show you the equipment. Third day - how to process orders. Fourth day - quality standards, how to pack things. Fifth day - finally let you practice, maybe shadow someone for a bit. Days six and seven - more practice, some kind of test, then they put you on the floor.

Looks solid on paper. In reality, it falls apart the moment you actually need it.

Two things break this whole setup when peak season hits.

First problem: you can't scale it. Say you need to get 50 people working in one week. Where do you put them? Who trains them? Most warehouses have one, maybe two training rooms. Maybe three trainers if you're lucky. So what happens? People sit around. New hire shows up Monday, gets told "your training slot is Thursday." Meanwhile orders are piling up, managers are panicking, and these people who want to work are literally doing nothing because there's nowhere to put them.

Second, memory overload. Research shows people can actively process 3-5 chunks of information at once [3]. Standard training dumps 30-40 procedures into someone's head over a week. They might nod along, might even pass a quiz, but put them on the floor three days later and watch them freeze. The information never properly encoded - too much, too fast, all in theory without practice.

Now reality: in any logistics operation, roughly 20% of tasks account for 80% of work volume. Standard picking, basic packing, simple labeling, scanning. These tasks are frequent but simple. A person can learn to do them correctly in hours, not days.

The rest of the tasks - fixing broken systems, dealing with damaged boxes, handling pissed-off customers on the phone - yeah, that matters. But it doesn't happen every day. Maybe once a week, maybe less. So why waste the first three days teaching someone how to handle situations they might not see for a month? By the time they actually need it, they'll have forgotten anyway.

We started asking ourselves one question: what's the bare minimum this person needs to know to actually help us today?

Turns out, not much. Three, maybe four things.

Someone walks in Monday morning. First hour, we show them around. Here's the bathroom, here's the break room, here's the emergency exit, don't stand under the forklifts. Basic stuff.

Next three hours: one task. Let's say picking items off shelves. Trainer shows them how, then they do it. Again. And again. Twenty times, maybe more. Trainer watches, corrects them right there - "No, scan it first, then put it in the bin." Do it wrong, you hear about it immediately, you fix it, you do it again.

Afternoon: second task. Packing boxes. Same deal. Show, practice, repeat, correct, repeat some more.

By Monday afternoon, this person can do two things correctly. Tuesday morning: add one or two more procedures. Tuesday afternoon: deploy to a controlled zone where only these tasks exist.

Why does this stripped-down training actually work better? Three reasons, and they're not complicated.

One: you're not drowning people in information. Human brain can only hold so much at once - maybe four or five things if you're lucky [3]. When you teach someone forty procedures in a week, most of it just slides off. They nod, they smile, they forget. But teach them three things really well? That sticks. They can actually use it.

Two: they practice it immediately. Not three days later after sitting through more lectures. Right now. Today. You show them how to do basic picking, they do it twenty times before lunch. By afternoon it's starting to feel natural. Brain doesn't have time to forget because you're reinforcing it constantly.

Three: they learn it where they'll actually use it. Not in some training room with fake scenarios. On the real warehouse floor, with real orders, real equipment, real noise and chaos around them. So when you deploy them the next day, nothing's a surprise. They've already been there.

But here's the part that makes this possible: you have to break down what "warehouse work" actually means. You can't just say "learn logistics." That's too big, too vague.

Traditional staffing treats everyone the same. Morning meeting: "We've got 3,000 orders today. Everybody grab from the queue." New person gets the same mix as veterans. Result: rookie spends 15 minutes on what should take 3, makes mistakes, slows down the whole operation.

We do it differently. System tracks what people actually do - how fast, how many mistakes, what kind of tasks. Then it routes work to whoever can handle it without making a mess. New person just started yesterday? They get the easy stuff. Someone's been here two weeks? Okay, they can take on a bit more. Really weird order that needs someone who knows all the tricks? That goes to the veterans.

You don't want your best people spending hours on stuff a rookie could do. And you definitely don't want rookies drowning in complicated orders they've never seen. So when a simple order comes in, system checks: got someone new who's free? Send it there. Nobody? Fine, check the next level up. That's it.

Most places don't do this. They just throw all the work in one pile and whoever grabs it, grabs it. Then the expert wastes time on trivial crap while the new guy is stuck on something way over his head, taking forever, probably getting it wrong.

But listen, this doesn't just magically happen. You need the tech to make it work. Your warehouse system has to track what each person is doing, how fast they're doing it, how many mistakes they make. Not just "warehouse processed 5000 orders today." You need "Maria did 47 tasks, made 2 mistakes, averaged 4 minutes per task." Most systems don't do that. They track overall numbers, maybe count how many items someone picked. That's not enough.

You also need software that can make split-second decisions about who gets what work based on who's free and what they can handle. It's not complicated programming

- honestly, the logic is pretty straightforward. But it costs money to build and set up. And most mid-sized warehouses look at that price tag and say no thanks [1, 5].

Here's the uncomfortable truth: the accelerated model requires more supervision hours than the traditional approach. Not forever, just during those critical first 2-3 weeks.

Standard model runs about 1 supervisor per 15-20 workers. That ratio was designed for steady-state operations where most people know what they're doing. During peaks, when 40-50% of your workforce is brand new, that ratio catastrophically fails.

We implemented variable supervision density. In zones with lots of new people, the ratio drops to 1:6 or 1:8. In areas staffed by veterans, it stretches to 1:25. Total supervision hours increase by about 20-30%, but the character of supervision changes completely.

Here's how it actually works in practice. Say someone who started three days ago suddenly gets three moderately tricky orders in a row - maybe the routing system hiccuped. Their speed drops. They're taking longer than usual. System flags it, pings the supervisor. Supervisor walks over, takes a look. "Hey, you good? Need help with these?" Maybe they reassign one of those orders to someone more experienced. Maybe supervisor just talks them through it real quick. Takes two minutes. But now that person doesn't mess up the order, doesn't send wrong items to a customer, doesn't create a problem that'll take an hour to fix later.

That's the whole point. Stop the mistake before it happens instead of cleaning up the mess after.

And yeah, this means supervisors work more hours. Maybe 20-30% more during those first few weeks. Costs money. But think about what errors actually cost. Customer gets wrong item - you pay for return shipping. You pay someone to process the return. You pay to ship the correct item. Customer service spends time on the phone apologizing. Customer maybe never orders again. Add it all up, one error costs you maybe three or four times what you spent on that supervisor walking over and preventing it in the first place [6, 7].

But most operations don't think this way. They see "supervision" as overhead. Something to minimize. So they run skeleton crews of supervisors, errors explode, and they just accept it as the cost of peak season. It's backwards.

Most operations resist this because supervision looks like overhead. They see labor hours, they see cost, they cut it. Then they wonder why quality tanks during peaks.

The logistics industry has accepted that peak seasons mean quality compromise. You scale up, quality drops, customers complain - that's just how things work. This approach shows that's false.

You can double or triple your team without everything falling apart. The thing is, you have to stop thinking about training as this thing where someone either is or isn't ready. That's bullshit. Nobody finishes a week of training and walks out ready for everything. They're sort of ready for some things, depending on what you ask them to do.

Training doesn't end. It just keeps going. You start someone on two or three tasks they can actually learn. You put them to work right away while it's still fresh in their head. You give them work they can do without panicking. Then, bit by bit, you add more as they prove they can handle it. First few weeks, supervisor's watching them closely. After a month, less so. After two months, they're mostly on their own.

This works because it's how people actually learn things. You don't dump a textbook on someone's head and expect them to know everything. That's not how brains work. Yeah, new people are slow. That's fine. Slow is way better than wrong. Slow you can fix with time. Wrong costs you customers.

What you're really doing is paying more upfront - better systems, more supervisor time, proper training setup - so you don't pay ten times more later dealing with returns, complaints, damaged reputation, lost customers.

Most importantly, it resolves the false choice between speed and quality. You can have both if you stop pretending adaptation happens on schedule and start managing it as a dynamic process.

This approach focused on warehouse logistics because that's where access and implementation occurred. But logistics isn't monolithic. Last-mile delivery, freight forwarding, cold-chain operations - they all have different task structures and constraints. Does the accelerated model transfer? Probably, but someone needs to test it and adapt protocols.

There's also the question of returning seasonal workers. What happens to people who come back year after year? Do they retain training from previous seasons? How does re-onboarding work? Initial observations suggest returning workers reach full capability in 1-2 days versus 1-2 weeks for complete rookies, but systematic documentation is needed.

Finally, there's barely scratched potential of predictive analytics in supervision. Current systems use simple rules-based alerts. With more sophisticated machine learning on historical error patterns, you could probably predict problems even earlier, maybe even intervene before someone gets assigned a problematic task. That technology exists, but integration into warehouse systems is still uncommon [1, 5].

These are practical questions with real operational impact. They're worth answering.

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