

WORDS ON WISE MANAGEMENT

Make employee training worth it, not wasteful

by Brad Federman
F&H Solutions Group

British-Canadian author Elizabeth Thornton once said, "Objective leaders identify their unproductive mental models and tweak them for greater effectiveness." The same can be said for employers and employees.

Say some of your employees are working less than efficiently. You decide that the solution is to send them to a training session. When they return, the results don't improve as much as you would like. It would be relatively easy to believe the training session is at fault, and sometimes that's true. What I've come to find, though, is that the issue of ineffective training is far more complex than that.

Training doesn't produce results

There are several reasons training sessions in any industry don't produce desired results. To understand the issue, however, we need to understand precisely what a training session is.

Training is simply an experience in which a worker has the opportunity to grasp new information. The trainee must be willing to accept the new information or the training will have been for nothing.

Key attributes to success after training

There are three key attributes that contribute to a worker's success after she has undergone training:

- (1) **Attitude.** If an employee doesn't have the right attitude toward training, or even her job, then she will remain ineffectual. Motivated workers will strive to apply what they have learned from training.
- (2) **Skill set.** A person must be right for the job. Training builds on and develops certain skills, but the worker must have the necessary skill set for her job in order for training to be effective.
- (3) **Awareness and understanding.** An employee can be more motivated and skilled than anyone else, but if she isn't sure how to do the job, then all that potential is wasted.

Training is a process

Let's assume that your employees generally embody all three of those attributes, but training hasn't produced the results you had hoped for. It's likely

because you view training as an event rather than a process. There's a common misconception that training is a one and done deal. Like any skill, training takes time to develop and implement in the workplace.

It's very helpful to implement secondary training sessions to build on or refresh what employees learned in previous training. "Reinforcement" sessions help keep new skills fresh. As a manager, you have the responsibility to constantly support employee growth. In addition to providing reinforcement sessions, you can motivate workers to apply what they've learned in training by raising their pay, recognizing their accomplishments, and implementing policies that support the skill sets needed for success.

Training as an investment

There are always financial concerns with training: What if we shell out the money to train someone and he leaves the company? Then again, how can we remain competitive if we don't train our employees?

It's important to weigh the costs and benefits of training. If you provide training for your employees and maintain the skills they learned, the payoff will likely far outweigh the initial costs.

Interactive, engaging training

It's critical that training sessions actually keep employees engaged. Studies show that people learn, retain, and apply information better if they are actively involved in learning as opposed to taking in and regurgitating material from a class.

Bottom line

So how does training relate to the words of Elizabeth Thornton? As an employer, you want to tweak your staff for maximum effectiveness. Job training can go a long way toward helping you achieve that, so it shouldn't be underestimated. However, it's equally important to make sure your employees have a solid foundation and are able to keep the new skills they learn fresh and put them to use. Increasing employee

effectiveness is a joint effort by the employee, the trainer, management, and the organization as a whole.

Brad Federman is an employee engagement expert with F&H Solutions Group. He can be reached at 901-291-1547 or bfederman@fhsolutionsgroup.com. ♣

