

Training Success

Make It Part of Your Company Culture

By Jenny Budreau and Andy Janning

Most companies would agree that a key element to operating a successful business is having motivated, talented employees who are knowledgeable about the products and services they provide. Once employees with these characteristics are hired, the focus turns to retaining them.

Staff turnover is expensive and time consuming. For FORUM Credit Union, recently named among the top 125 training organizations in the country and among the 66 companies listed as Best Places to Work in Indiana, successfully incorporating training and professional development into the business culture is the foundation on which overall organizational success is built.

Integrating a training and professional development program is important for companies of all sizes and doesn't have to be expensive. Employees, whether working for a company with 400 people or 40, want and expect such opportunities. Providing them is necessary to attract and retain top employee talent. A great way to keep training expenses low is to leverage subject matter experts among employees to augment (or serve as) a training team.

At FORUM, more than 15% of the workforce is involved with the design, calibration and delivery of training content. Use the people who know the subject best to help prepare content and deliver the training. Employees should know that if they have expertise in a certain area, the expectation is to pass it on to others.

Four R's

Respect, results, recommendation and recognition are all important aspects that differentiate successful training programs from less effective top-down training initiatives. Senior management within an organization must have respect for the training that is being conducted, support it and make training a priority. We all have jobs to do, and it's easy to let training slip in importance. Support from senior management is essential to ensure that all employees are allowed to take time for training, which ultimately benefits your business through improved delivery of service, more efficient processing and other cost-saving measures.

Trainers should respect the time of those being trained and have clear objectives with measurable results that tie back to the company's overall business goals. If training doesn't ultimately tie back to an organizational goal, you should question the merit of offering the class.

Results

Trainers sometimes become obsessed with measuring the wrong things. It's important not to measure training success by the number of people who participated in the program, but by the results seen following training. Ask managers what the team's goals are. Based on the goals, devise training classes that improve the employee's ability to reach them.

The class may be technical or focused on "soft" skills such as how to deliver more effective sales and service. Results for

communications and leadership classes may be based on the employee's increased ability to refer new services to customers or advance to positions with increased responsibility.

Recommendation

Buy-in from employees is essential in making training a part of your company's culture. They have to talk to their peers about the training they have received and how the classes have helped their performance, understanding or overall leadership abilities. If employees and their managers do not feel the training provided concrete benefits that relate to department goals, it is unlikely others will make the time to participate in future classes.



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Recognition

When involving employees in training design and delivery, it's important to recognize their efforts, tying that effort back to the organization's overall success. Recognition can also come in the form of appreciation. Hosting a breakfast or lunch with senior management and employee trainers, for example, is one way to acknowledge contributions made toward helping the organization develop its workforce.

Leadership development

In most industries, especially service-focused ones, it's important to offer a mix of development classes – such as improving communication and leadership skills – as well as hands-on training the employee needs to perform day-to-day operations. Both pieces lead to a more successful outcome, increasing efficiency and driving the organization forward.

Have fun

It can be a challenge to keep employees and trainers engaged and motivated year after year, especially with some of the core classes (such as computer skills and member service) that are repeated frequently. To keep attendees engaged, get them active, use a combination of hands-on, role-play and instructional techniques and, most importantly, have fun in every class!

INFORMATION LINK

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