How to Accomplish Effective Workplace Training

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The internet is littered with information on how to create effective workplace training programs, so it's very likely this isn't the first article you've read on the topic.

There are data-rich infographics that show you how to drastically reduce turnover, anecdotal articles that explain how you can skyrocket employee morale, promotional videos that excitedly demonstrate how to half re-training costs — you can find it all, and all within just a few minutes of browsing the web.

This access to such a broad and diverse array of material, most of which is completely free, is great for businesses and their employees. However, with an overload of ideas and methods, the overselling of benefits of different systems and strategies, and the lack of adequate support and guidance for implementation, choosing an effective workplace training program can still often seem as difficult as ever.

For this reason, we want to strip away all the fluff and give our two cents on the topic, based on what we've seen and found in our [own established and dynamic practice.](#)

How Do We Achieve Effective Training?

No matter how complex or large your training program, for it to be successful, clear goals and objectives must first be identified.

One way to do this is by using the SMART principle. SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound. It's also important to ensure they emphasize what you want employees to do (or do better), while avoiding focusing on what they should not do.

This second point is critical to success. Placing an importance in your coaching on positives rather than negatives will help encourage employees and avoid them feeling at an increased risk of failure.

With this framework in mind, we can start to think about the training goals and the people behind them. Are the employees learning new skills, new technologies for old skills, or better workplace behavior? Are the employees veterans in the workplace or fresh-faced new starters?

When goal-setting for trainees, for example, it's paramount they understand the purpose of the training. Employees unclear on why they are asked to learn something new will not engage, and engagement is critical to retention.

For long-term staff, it's more important they keep an open mind and are not intimidated or closed off from learning new skills and habits.

In both cases, if you can create incentives, like Wilson's PRIDE program, badges, or other gamification, employees will be inspired by the sense of competition and be more likely to participate.

What Are Challenges to Effective Workplace Training?

One of the difficulties in training adults is that although they learn differently than children, trainers can default to teaching in the same way in which they learned as adolescents.

For instance, adults are usually self-directed, goal-oriented, and come to the table with existing knowledge, experience, and opinions. Adults also vary generationally in the way they learn and process information.

Effective workplace training, then, considers these differences and uses different teaching techniques and styles to reach a broader audience. But this raises another main issue in delivering effective training regimes: shortages of time, resources, and money.

To combat this, consider providing training in intervals. Think of it like training at the gym: do sets of training until a skill is mastered and have trainees intentionally set aside time to practice. Digital methods like short videos, articles, and checklists allow employees to consume as much knowledge as they can in a small amount of time.

The biggest challenge to effective training, though, as we began, is often identifying the right approach to training. A training program, no matter if it's based on the best resources, adequate time, and high-quality instructors, will still fail if based on the wrong approach.

The "right" approach is not just something that looks the best on paper but is real and applicable. Most importantly, it should be collaborative and engaging.

Most courses continue to use the traditional instructor-led training model and avoid the challenge of engaging employees. Instructor-led classrooms can be efficient when presenting large amounts of material to a large group of people, but they most often fail to be interactive, and the effectiveness of the training depends heavily on the skills of the lecturer.

Instead, trainers should engage employees using interactive methods such as small group discussions, case studies, role-playing, and/or demonstrations. Employees that help each other and learn together are forced to think about what they are learning in a way that's simply not possible in an instructor-led course.

How Do We Find the Right Trainer?

Finding the right trainer is an essential component of effective training. Although trainings are most successful when they are performed by professionals with knowledge and expertise in the target subject matter, the right trainer is not necessarily an experienced professional.

Look for a person with aptitude and the right attitude. A candidate who is experienced in, say, Microsoft Office, might make a great trainer for Word, but a potential trainer with the right mindset towards people and processes can be easily trained or coached to teach any number of new tools or skills.

The person should be able to guide employees throughout their orientation and learning to keep things running smoothly. Other characteristics of good trainers or mentors include traits such as patience,

open-mindedness, creativity, flexibility, and organization. The right trainer also makes training more enjoyable and helps trainees retain more information through the use of humor, encouraged participation, and tailoring the learning experience to make it more enjoyable and fun.

How Do We Determine if Training is Effective?

To determine if training is successful, there's no better way than using an accountability system. A good system will measure the effectiveness of whether trainers successfully communicated information and whether trainees successfully applied what they learned to their job performance.

To create your system and test a training's effectiveness, look at the following four factors: (1) The employees' reaction to the training; (2) The employees' actual learning; (3) The employees' post-training job behavior; and (4) The quantifiable business results.

Find out if employees feel like they have learned and use detailed assessments to confirm. Observe employees post-training behavior to see if they are taking the new knowledge, skills, or attitudes from training and applying them in the workplace. Then, scrutinize business goals to see if there have been results from the training (e.g. workplace incidents decreased or revenue increased).

Conclusion

Effective workplace training is an important part of every business today. The effectiveness of it depends not on the newness or cost of the training, but how it is designed, developed, and implemented.

Aim to keep your training engaging and productive by using a variety of techniques, while also always keeping your business goals in mind. Remember the audience is filled with adults who want to know why they are learning the material and its relevance to their daily jobs. Use a knowledgeable, experienced trainer familiar with the subject matter, and periodically test the effectiveness of the training to ensure objectives are being met.

Above all, remember effective workplace training is not difficult. Once you cut through all the noise online and put in a little time and planning, every training can be effective.