

INSIDE BUSINESS

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Insight *Customized training builds skilled and motivated employees – and profit*

By Nancy Toomey

It's the economy, lately. Or is it?

We can't control current economic conditions but we can retool, rethink and retrain for changing times. As companies customize their strategy and tactics to maintain or grow profitability, a customized training program from a quality provider can instill their vision in everyone down to their last employee and prepare them to work along with management to make that vision a reality.

Leaders set the tone for forward thinking by their staffs. Without initiatives from management, employees become bored, discouraged and complacent. When these three mindsets dwell in the heart of a workplace, productivity drops and so do profits. The best employees leave and move on to more dynamic work environments.

"Because we've always done it this way" was the answer from a boss at a nonprofit organization when approached with a question. Later when the nonprofit's national organization held a contest asking the local centers for new ideas for a science program, this same boss said, "We don't participate in those contests because they take our ideas don't give us any credit for them."

The employee sent an idea anyway. It was awarded a prize of \$1,000 and within two months the employee was fired by this same boss. His next employer was thrilled with his creativity and energy and trained him in new skills.

The culture within an organization creates a climate for job satisfaction and provides

the energy with which employees approach their work. What is your corporate culture? Is it forward thinking? Does it reward ideas and prepare valued employees for advancement within?

Or does it point them to the door with bored frustration and leave you lamenting your talent drain?

A culture that values employees and their contributions breeds loyalty and increased productivity. One of the most effective ways to demonstrate your commitment to advancement – not only to the company and profit margins but also to the development of a highly skilled and, more importantly, highly motivated work force – is to consistently invest in training programs for your management and frontline workers.

A good training provider can work to customize course content specifically for your company's goals, your way of doing business and your people, systems and operation.

What are the steps to creating a learning culture in a business?

1. Get management on board.
2. Use a survey tool or small group meetings to assess goals and needs.
3. Start out small and grow.
4. Make connections between the training schedule and an organization's goals.
5. Find a quality training provider.
6. Make it ongoing.
7. Measure results.
8. Find the right training space and

schedule to fit into the rhythm of your workday/week.

9. Create a culture of learning for everyone.
10. Stress training as an investment/benefit for employees.

Well-trained staffs work with more autonomy, which frees up supervisors to focus less on the minute-by-minute transactions of the day and more on strategic management questions.

Well-trained staff members are better prepared for promotions. Promoting from within encourages loyalty from those who watch what's happening and think, "I could be next."

Finally, when well-trained staffs boost profits and growth, job candidates for new openings are assured that similar investments in their future will come along with the job they accept with a growing organization.

Maybe it's not the economy. But even if it is, customized training helps businesses weather the times, good or bad.

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