

Identifying staff training needs

Too many managers view training as a luxury, not a competitive and strategic necessity. "What if we train our employees and they leave?" they ask. Well, what if you don't train them and they stay?

Are you one of those managers who looks at training as a nice-to-have instead of a must-have? To assess your commitment to your staff training needs, see how many of the following statements hit close to home:

1. Training gets in the way of getting the job done.
2. I believe in training as long as it doesn't take me or my staff away from "important" tasks that must get done.
3. I can't tell you the last time that any member of my staff or I attended a training or self-improvement course.
4. I can't show you an upcoming schedule for my personal and staff training. In fact, my answer is generally, "What schedule?"
5. I look forward to training so I can catch up on my to-do list.
6. My company has no clearly articulated philosophy on the value of training. Even if they did, I wouldn't be able to produce a copy.
7. If we are forced to go to a training session, we almost never discuss the content in our staff meetings. Out of sight, out of mind - that's our philosophy.
8. There is no way to link our success to our investment in employee development.
9. When, and if, we get around to conducting performance reviews, we don't consider the completion of training important.

If you've used or heard more than three of these lines in your company, then you've got a training problem. And in today's business landscape, training is not just a matter of survival; it's what separates high performance organisations from those that go under.

Training is more than just building the skills and knowledge of each individual of your team for their own personal benefit. Companies that have invested in training report the following benefits:

- **Improved recruiting.** Today's job applicant is looking for an environment that fosters personal growth and development. For many job hunters, training is every bit as important as the compensation package. Plus, an effective training program allows you to cast a wider net by hiring people with the right attitude. Developing the skills can come later.
- **Higher retention.** When people know that a company believes in their personal growth, they are likely to stay with that company for a longer period of time.
- **Better output.** The lower your turnover rate, the more productive, enthusiastic and motivated your workforce. Employees will pack their new knowledge and skills into everything they design, produce and service.

But, training will be effective only when certain conditions are met:

- **Buy-in from the top.** Without a commitment from top management, staff training will be nothing more than a charade. All layers of the company must believe that training is a process and not a singular learning event. They've got to provide budget and be committed to developing a learning atmosphere. Top corporate leaders must embrace training enthusiastically in corporate communications, business plans and individual performance goals. If personal development is part of the formal appraisal, your staff will know that a direct correlation exists between training, acquiring new skills and their career success.
- **Alignment with corporate goals.** Training should fit hand-in-glove with the company's strategic plan. In fact, if the goal-setting is done correctly and stretches corporate performance to new heights, it should be next to impossible to meet the new objectives without upgrading the skillset of your workforce. Training should help employees develop both technical mastery, as well as interpersonal skills such as effective communication, dispute resolution, quality management and team building.

- **Needs analysis.** Designing a training regimen should begin with an accurate assessment of what you do well and what needs improvement. Begin by documenting current performance and compare that against what could be. Get help from your team. What are the elements that are holding your team back? What skills do your people lack to do the job? How is their lack of skill and/or knowledge affecting performance? The goal is to demonstrate that with the acquisition of new skills through training, employees will enhance their job performance.
- **Delivery options.** There's an old saying, "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand." Apply this to your learning environment. There are many ways to deliver training - classroom, self-paced instruction, mentoring, computer-assisted and web-enabled, as well as special project opportunities. Choose the most effective delivery method for your team given your objectives.
- **Followup.** After the completion of the training, you must provide an opportunity to apply the skills. People cannot successfully learn the skills without practicing on the job. You also want to talk to each employee to ensure the training was valuable and provided them with the skills they needed. This also provides an opportunity for you to underscore your commitment to training and to identify any future staff training needs.

Source: Kelly Services Australia

http://www.kellyservices.com.au/web/au/services/en/pages/management_skills_identifying_staff_training_needs.html