

Avoiding the Post-Training Blues How to Invest Your Training Dollars Wisely

Identify the Reason for Training

Investing in employee training is not an activity that should be taken lightly. Unfortunately, it often is. Every day, countless organizations send their employees to one of the thousands of seminars held throughout the country. And when the employee returns to work, no one asks, "So what did you learn and how are you going to use it?" What's worse, those same organizations may bring a training provider onsite expecting a miracle, and then after the excitement of the day wears off (assuming it was a good session) nothing really changes back on the job.

Mercifully, by doing a little work up front, you can save yourself a lot of money. First, identify the reason(s) why you believe your organization needs training.

Typically people schedule onsite training for one of three reasons:

1. As part of regular employee development.
2. To expose a group of employees to the same material. (To have everyone singing off the same sheet of music.)
3. To correct a performance gap.

If your reason falls into the first category, the biggest challenge you will most likely face is selecting topics that are relevant to the group you are serving. The easiest way to do this is to survey the potential participants and ask them what courses they would like to attend, what they expect to learn, and how that will improve their performance back on the job. You should then pass that information on to the training provider.

If you are planning training to expose all employees to the same materials, the biggest challenge you potentially face is the range of knowledge and abilities among participants. For instance, those working at an advanced level may feel the session is a waste of time. You can help your training provider make the session(s) successful by telling all participants well before the training that the purpose of the program is to create consistency.

Five Questions You Need to Ask Yourself

1. What gaps in performance have I observed?
2. Are those gaps a result of lack of training or something else?
3. Are the participants receptive to training?
4. Is my organization willing and able to reinforce learning points after the session?
5. Will the program sponsor* attend the session?

* The person driving the training decision/approving funds for the training session.

Finally, if you are planning onsite training to correct a performance gap, you need to be sure that training is really the answer. Training is not magic. By itself, it will not change behaviors that cannot or will not change.

When Training Is or Is Not the Answer

Before scheduling training to correct performance gaps, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Does the gap exist because employees don't know how to do the required work or because they don't want to?

If the answer is the latter or partially the latter, training will not correct the performance gap.

2. Does the gap exist because there is no recognition for performing well and/or no consequence for not performing as desired?

If either of those conditions exist, training alone will not correct the performance gap.

3. Are the employees intellectually/physically capable of doing the work?

If not, you have a job misfit. Training will not correct the performance gap.

4. Do the employees already have the job knowledge and needed attitude to complete the work?

If the answer is yes and a gap still exists, training is probably not the answer. You may need to look at other factors. For instance, do employees have access to the appropriate equipment and resources?

5. Are employees positive about their work and intellectual/physical capable of doing the job, but lack training? Furthermore, is your organization ready to reinforce new behaviors?

If you can answer, "yes" to all of those questions, next you must choose a training provider.

Danger

If your primary purpose is to close a performance gap, think carefully before choosing participants. Some might not need the training and resent having to attend. For instance, if a group of employees needs help with writing, do not include those already working up to the desired standard in a basic writing course. They will more than likely not want to be there.

Furthermore, if only one person has a performance gap, think about whether you are using training instead of coaching or counseling. Addressing the problems of one employee as if they are the problems of a group is a recipe for disaster.

Choosing a Training Partner

Spending time up front asking a few questions can help you to make the right choice when it comes to selecting a training provider. The right instructor, the right materials, and the right training partner can make all of the difference. Once you have determined that onsite training is the way to go, you owe it to yourself to ask the following questions of the training providers you have found.

Twelve Questions You Need to Ask Your Training Partner

1. What results have other clients had from your programs?
2. What is your responsibility for getting those results?
3. How are your programs different from those offered in hotels and other public venues?
4. How can you help us choose the right program?
5. What if we don't find exactly what we are looking for in your catalog?
6. What kind of materials do you provide?
7. May we review your materials before class?
8. How interactive is your course?
9. How much experience do your instructors have?
10. May we talk with the instructor(s) before class?
11. How do you get participant buy-in?
12. What tools do you provide to help participants use their newly acquired skills?

If you don't like the answers you get, or if the training provider simply can't answer the questions, look somewhere else. Good training providers will always try to make sure that you get the right solution even if that means they are not the ones to provide it.

Remember: homework on the front end can make you a hero after the fact.

Download Pricing Sheet, Trainer Bios, and Previous Client List at www.businesstrainingworks.com
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