Increasing the Impact of Training – A Guide for Managers

	Questions for Managers to Ask
Training and developing employees has become a key method for organizations to differentiate themselves in the marketplace; it is also an important investment to stay competitive in a rapidly changing technological world. In 2002 U.S corporations spent $55 billion on employee training and development, averaging $500 per employee. Given the importance of employee development, its direct and indirect costs, it is critical that employees be able learn effectively and apply the information they learn on the job in order to recoup the investment made in their education.	
Training, like all learning, is an ongoing process, not an event. It requires planning and preparation before during and after learning program to ensure its success. Here are some ways to increase the impact of training before, during and after the training occurs.	
Before Training	
Ensure that training is the appropriate solution. Too often employees get "sent" to training when there is a performance problem that should be addressed separately. Is coaching or mentoring more appropriate than a class? Know what the employee should be able to do differently or what knowledge they should gain by the end of the program. If the solution is to "fix" an employee problem, work with the human resources team for solutions rather than spending the money on training.	Is training the right solution for the performance issue I want to address?
Leading companies make direct links between an employee's job, the businesses goals and its customers before they attend training. Many tie the programs selected to their employees' development plans. Employees who feel they have been sent to training without an understanding of the goal of the program will be less likely to successfully apply the knowledge back on the job.	Is the training program tied to my employee's development plan?
Maximize the effectiveness of training. Have managers meet with employees before they attend a training program to outline the goals of the program and to encourage employees to bring current problems and/or job related issues or case studies with them to class. Make sure that employees understand that the training is the employees' responsibility; that they are expected to apply themselves before, during and after the session. Be sure to discuss any concerns they may have about attending the program or applying the training back on the job.	Have I met with my employee to discuss the benefits of attending this training program and why it is important to the company?
Ensure that managers and supervisors understand their role in the training process. Managers may not have worked in an organization that specifically works on transferring the knowledge and skills gained from training back on the job. Do not assume that managers will meet with their employees about the training they will attend.	Do my managers understand the role they play in their employees' training programs?
The longer the training program, the more important it is that employees understand the purpose of the class. Some people go to training programs or conferences hoping it will be a mini "vacation" from the everyday demands of their jobs. Others go to training as "prisoners" because they were told by management to attend. Effective "learners" attend programs because they are looking to increase their skills in a	

particular area and hope to enhance their careers. The more managers assert the goals expected from the program and support their employees' attendance the more likely employees will be learners.

During Training

Trainers should relate their course material and information to the company's business goals, emphasize the importance of training, and encourage participants to approach the program as learners... it is more than time away from the office.

Ensure that the programs you choose have clear learning objectives and outcomes. Consult with your training department or organizations like the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD www.astd.org) to learn more. Managers should learn about the pre-course assignments that go out to employees. If the program is run onsite by a vendor educate them about your company, and goal for the program. This will allow vendors to tailor the program to the needs of the audience and bring relevant examples.

Remind employees that in order to get the most out of the program they need to focus their energy on learning and they need to eliminate as many outside distractions as possible. Be especially aware of this when training is held at the employees' location. While it can save money to hold classes onsite, it also increases the likelihood that people will be pulled out for meetings, telephone calls and so on.

In the case of e-learning, encourage employees to book time in their schedules as they would any other meeting for learning. Have their phone go directly to voicemail. Some companies have created signs for office doors "e-learning at work" as a creative do not disturb sign.

After Training

The most important but often overlooked part of a training program is what to do with the information once the training program is over! It is too easy to shelve the manual or handouts received at training, relegating them to become dust collectors. Training organizations and managers play a key role in assuring that employees can make use of the training they have received.

Some training organizations provide small laminated cards that contain highlights of the content covered in class. Some have employees write letters to themselves with the things they will do differently or a plan of how they will use what they have learned as a result of the training and mail it to them a month after the program has ended, as a reminder. Others send periodic emails, with short summaries of the information learned.

Requiring employees to share the key knowledge they gained with colleagues at a team meeting is another way to get employees to use what they have learned at program. Not only can this sharing be a team building opportunity but it reinforces what the employee has learned.

While it might take managers a little more time to meet with employees before and after they participate in a training program it can also increase the chance that they will be able to make training a true process for improvement and not just a one-time event.

Need additional assistance with your training needs? Contact Pro Way Development at lauramjacob@yahoo.com to learn about our training programs.