

Tips on Making Training Effective

Stanforth Learning and Development



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This is the time of year is when many companies undertake their main appraisal process and identify their training priorities for the rest of the year.

How well these priorities are identified and the effectiveness of the training that takes place can have an effect on both the effectiveness of the team and the morale and motivation of the individuals in question. Too often team members can be asked to identify with a list of courses rather than what areas they would like to develop and little time is often spent identifying the skills gap in the context of the employees role. This situation can lead employees to be unconvinced of the skills they need to enhance, viewing training as a remedial rather than development activity. The situation of demotivated and resentful employees arriving on courses whose objectives are not contextualised into the employee's development plan is a recipe for wasted investment and a missed opportunity to make a real difference on both an individual and company level.

So as we consider how to use our scarce training budget for 2013 lets rediscover a few tips that might help us squeeze the most value for everyone.

Talk about the gaps.

Organisations / markets and competition develop and change so why should our people be any different. It's important to know what we are good at but we should also be aware of how our performance can develop to increase productivity. Make sure that when

you talk about training needs you identify the difference between the actual performance being delivered and the ideal performance you are looking for. It's important to remember that the actual performance may not be under performance even if not ideal. You can position ideal performance as process improvement and development to be achieved during the year. By identifying performance levels as they are now and predicting where they need to be in the future you involve your people in visioning the future of the business as well as their place in it.

Talk behaviours and activities not courses.

It's still common for training or HR departments to have a list of available courses that people progress through over their time with the company. Whilst these may be excellent workshops and create a shared understanding of important business areas they have little congruity with the needs of the individual or business. Ensure that when identifying training needs you avoid the temptation to identify cliché's such as "communication skills" or "leadership". What exactly do you want people to do differently? – How will you observe and monitor progress and what difference do you expect it to make? Once you can answer these questions then the course content will follow and you can call it whatever you wish. Just selecting courses by title assumes that one size will fit all and we all understand the subject in the same way. It will also generate assumptions and expectations in your people. For example

a delegate may feel that attending a communication skills course is a waste of time for an experienced operative however if that course is explained in the context of new responsibilities and measures and a need to have a more influence based sales process and includes the right level of input the expectations can be very different.



"Listen, there's nothing wrong with being ambitious."

Involve the right people.

If training is to improve knowledge, increase skills and refine attitude it would be a mistake to not include the subject of your focus, in this case the potential delegate. Many people still arrive on training courses without being briefed on the content or purpose and being unaware of the objectives and why they are there. Whilst the leader may not be paying for the training personally their role as custodians of fiscal responsibility should ensure that training spend is maximised by ensuring that their people are well prepared for any courses they attend. Delegates have the best experience when they have discussed the course with their managers and agreed the areas they need to focus on and the objectives they should be working towards. The delegate should bring their objectives with them on the course and be prepared to

talk their learning and experience through with their manager after the event.

Follow up and assess

The training tick sheet is probably best known form of evaluation on training courses but what does it really measure? In most cases it is little more than the extent to which the delegate liked the trainer and engaged with them. This may be an excellent comment on the classroom experience but can be a poor indicator of the effectiveness of the trainer or the material used. The learning process is a partnership that delegates must participate in and a measure of their professionalism the ability to focus on outcomes and aims rather than personality. The true measure of training effectiveness is the extent to which it is implemented and drives change from the delegate's point of view. When evaluating the training being challenged or taken outside their comfort zone is not an excuse for disengagement. People who do not take on learning and make steps to implement it are copping out of their responsibilities as employees. Managers must be aware of the material covered and prompt and challenge their people to change behaviour through structured follow up.

Create Context

One of the biggest barriers to delegates engaging in training is the feeling that it doesn't relate to their job and their world. All people believe their role, business and problems are unique, however they often overlook the similarities they have with the rest of the working world. Trainers and consultants need to ensure they have an understanding of the culture and language of the role so they can be credible in their delivery. They should also seek out examples of situations that people might find

themselves in a collect stories and situations to add colour and texture to their delivery.

If training is to be conducted on courses they should relate directly to the world and situations experienced by the delegates. People want to hear about what we can do and what we can learn from others. The closer the examples and experiences relate to the delegate the more people will feel that you are talking to them think about what they could do with the learning.

How we can help you get the best value from your training investment.

- We will **tailor content** to suit your people's needs and recommend the best way to format the training.
- We will provide **briefing materials prior to the course for all delegates and their managers** and be available to answer questions and queries.
- We will learn about your company so we can make the learning **relevant and realistic** for your people.
- We will provide **ongoing action planning** as the learning progresses so ideas are captured as they develop.
- **We will provide a 30 minute follow session for each delegate to further inspire real change.**

For more information contact

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