



11 Essentials of Truly Effective Training

- 1. Understand your objectives.** All too often training is conducted because a new technology has been introduced or someone in Human Resources has created a talent development program. Worthy initiatives certainly, but training that is merely a formality of such programs will be a waste of time and money. Training cannot be effective without first answering the question of what it is supposed to accomplish. What will the trainees be able to do that they could not do before? How will the new knowledge and/or skill contribute to the goals of your business?
- 2. Measure before and after.** The only way to know for sure that training has been effective is to measure the results or the behavior that you want to change before the training, set benchmarks for what you would like to see after the training and measure the results at appropriate intervals. Summary tests and evaluation forms reflect immediate impressions, but they cannot measure true learning. The proof is in the pudding, so to speak.
- 3. Get buy-in from the trainees.** People rarely learn anything that they don't want to know. If employees are required to take training, which they don't feel they need, they will suffer through it and return immediately to previous behaviors. Trainees must understand and agree with the objectives of the training.
- 4. Keep it in context.** Nothing kills a good training session like the phrase, "You can apply this to your own situation." All of the training and the examples and every reference that is made should already apply to the trainee's situation. If it is not directly relevant, they will not pay attention and who can blame them?
- 5. Focus on benefits.** Knowledge for its own sake is a laudable goal for some, but most people will respond better by understanding what's in it for them. Employees need to know how their lives are going to be made better by this training. Simplified tasks, fewer customer complaints, increased chance of promotion, job security and bonus potential are all true benefits of training.
- 6. Make the connections.** Some things are NOT best left to the imagination. Training programs should cover, in excruciating detail, how the material will be applied to day-to-day performance. The training program is just the beginning of knowledge that will further develop as a result of an organizational structure that encourages its use and sharing.
- 7. Engage and encourage.** All learning is collaborative, even if the trainees start out completely ignorant of the topic at hand. Trainees must participate and relate what they are learning to their personal experiences. Otherwise, you may transfer information, but no true learning will take place. Learning is a change in perspective that can only come when trainees "connect the dots."
- 8. Prepare and prepare some more.** Credibility is everything in the training environment. Working professionals expect those appointed to train them to understand their needs the material thoroughly. Trainers who try to fudge their way through off-the-shelf presentations without showing the relevance and application of the material to the trainees will irretrievably lose that audience.
- 9. Keep the background in the background.** The best possible start to an effective training program is to get to the point. Anything classified as background information should be reclassified as unnecessary information. Participants need to quickly see that the training will be worth their time and the only way to do that is to teach them something useful quickly. Once they tune out, it is very hard to get them back.
- 10. Make them laugh.** Training is not entertainment and trainers who confuse themselves with stand-up comics are doing a disservice to their clients. However, a little humor can both help engage the participants and boost credibility. The key is that, like everything else in a training session, the humor should be relevant. Knock-knock jokes are out, but an anecdote or one-liner which demonstrates that you understand the plight of the employees can go a long way.
- 11. Come through on commitments.** The thirty days after completion of training are much like the 24 hours after brain surgery – a truly crucial time. During this period, trainees will take some initiative to utilize the training they received. But if follow-up and reinforcement that was promised fails to be delivered, enthusiasm will erode and commitment will be lost.



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