

Training Your Employees

By Paul Uhl

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It is seldom that an employee in even a small company does not require some training. The most qualified person for the job needs to at least be oriented in the policies and procedures of his or her job duties. And training needs to be aligned with overall management goals.

If this seems overly simplistic, I have often visited companies where the employees seem to be floundering. "On the job training" usually means learning by trial and error. Job habits are often adapted from peer to peer, training is done by "word of mouth", (including all the bad habits), and there is frequently no clear or uniform process flow.

While "on the job training" has long been in use, it is quite less than optimal. This can actually be the most expensive training program around in terms of inefficiency, low performance, increased liability, and high employee turnover.

The ability to teach the employee a particular skill or task is critical if business expectations are to be met. Training need

not be in a formal classroom setting, but many experts find a step-by-step teaching method to be the most effective.

The training process can be broken down into 5 steps - Prepare, Tell, Show, Do, and Review. A closer look at each of these steps will assist the trainer (usually the owner/operator of a small business) in understanding this process.

1. Prepare

The first step in this process is to prepare the trainee.

Explain the duties and why they are important. You may also tell the employee why he or she was selected, what is expected, how will performance be measured, and how it will relate to success in the company.

2. Tell

Explain the task. Break it down into steps or key parts. A written checklist with all of the steps listed can provide effective feedback.

3. Show

Demonstrate how the task is to be done. Explain each step and emphasize key points. Ask questions to keep the trainee involved and to assess understanding.

4. Do

Let the trainee perform the task while being observed by the trainer. Have the trainee explain each step as it is being done.

5. Review

Provide feedback, encouragement, and constructive criticism. Repeat as needed until the trainee performs the task at an acceptable level.

Ideally, procedures should be documented for the trainee for future reference. Formalizing training material into a written format will reduce the time and cost of training to a fraction of that of unstructured learning (ie "on the job training").

The results of a well planned and conducted training program have far reaching and cost-effective benefits. When employees know what is expected of them, they can take a more active role in their own training and feel that they are truly succeeding. In turn, this can boost job satisfaction, increase efficiency, reduce the employee turnover rate, and decrease corporate liability.

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productive, and more motivated employees.
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