

Training

All of us who work in the service business understand that operations are both people-intensive and detail-intensive. It takes a lot of employees to provide the requisite levels of service and every aspect of service involves many details. These two facts make detailed, ongoing training an absolute necessity for any successful operation.

Types of Training. There are a wide variety of topics that must be taught to both managers and employees to fully prepare them for their jobs.

1. **Leadership Development** Training for managers and supervisors—designed to teach consistent, company-wide leadership skills, which are the driving force behind the company's success.
2. **Organizational Systems** Training such as Human Resource and Accounting Standards, Policies, and Procedures for managers and supervisors—designed to teach the underlying systems that permit the enterprise to operate efficiently.
3. **Company Culture** Training for all employees—designed to foster a thorough understanding of the company's values and service ethic.
4. **Legal Compliance** Training for managers, supervisors, and employees—designed to provide all required training in matters with legal implications for the company such as Equal Employment Opportunity, Fair Labor Standards Act, Sexual Harassment, and others.
5. **Liability Abatement** Training for managers, supervisors, and employees—designed to limit the company's liability exposure for Occupational Safety and Health, food sanitation, or product safety.
6. **Service Technique** Training for employees—designed to give each employee the skill set necessary to perform his job and meet high standards of service.

Items 1 through 5 above should be developed by the company and provided company-wide for consistency sake; item 6 is specific to each department and should be developed and taught by individual department heads.

Prerequisite to Training. Before establishing training requirements and materials, you must determine in great depth a company's operating standards, policies, and procedures. These are, after all, the backbone of any organized system of training.

Requirements for a Successful Training Program. Certain things are necessary in order for your training program to be successful:

- Leadership—the will to make it happen.
- The necessary focus and attention.
- Designated responsibilities and accountabilities.
- Established training objectives, standards, guidance, and budget.
- Administrative system or software to monitor and track training compliance.
- Training benchmarks and reports to track time and costs of training effort.
- Standardized list of teaching aids and equipment to facilitate training.

Training Principles. There are a number of principles which guide the development and implementation of a business' training plan:

- Not all employees learn equally well or fast; and not all employees find the same teaching techniques conducive to learning. Therefore, you need to develop training formats that meet the needs of all learners. Such formats will include self-study manuals, checklists, handouts, quizzes, DVDs, Power Point presentations, “on-the-go” training material, scripting of key customer interfaces, and ongoing discussions at staff meetings.
- Training employees is not a one-time task. New employees must receive initial training, but the amount of material that must be mastered requires that ongoing and refresher training be given in most topics and job skills.
- Some sort of Daily Huddle should be used by every department every shift to inspect staff, remind them of important service details, provide “on-the-go” training, and ensure every employee has the proper mind-set and enthusiasm to deliver high levels of service.
- Some training such as discrimination, sexual harassment, and safety training is required by law. Because of legal and liability issues, such training must be consistently taught throughout the company and such training thoroughly documented.
- All individuals tasked with training responsibilities must be trained. Completing a Train the Trainer class is a prerequisite to training other employees.

Strategies for Meeting Training Requirements. The following are suggested to help managers allocate the necessary time and resources for training:

- Incremental training—review the curriculum for each position. If there are 30 topics to be covered each year, break the training down into one lesson per week or two lessons every two weeks or five per month. By spreading the training burden over time, the amount that needs to be taught in any given week is lessened.
- Schedule in advance—plan and schedule a full year's training in advance so busy and slow periods can be noted and taken into account when scheduling training. Every so many weeks schedule an open training day that can be used to catch up when unforeseen levels of business force postponement of classes.
- Take advantage of traditionally slow times (identified by benchmarking revenues) to schedule the bulk of the training or instruction that takes longer to provide.
- Establish standard training days and times—this helps make training routine for both the instructor and employees.
- Use the Daily Huddle to take advantage of “on-the-go” training material to give short training sessions. On-the-go material can also be used whenever unexpected windows of time open up.
- Consider charging training hours to a General & Administrative account instead of to each department. Charging them to departments may prove a disincentive to train when managers' bonus calculations include controlling payroll costs.
- Benchmark all training sessions—track topics, dates, times, how many in attendance, as this will help establish a more efficient schedule for future years.

The Challenge. In establishing a formal discipline of training you are undertaking an extremely challenging endeavor—one that will demand your focused and persistent attention. While it adds a number of time-consuming tasks to an already busy schedule, it ultimately will make your job easier as the quality and efficiency of your operation improve. You can expect that problems and obstacles will arise as you press ahead with this challenging initiative, but with your continued “will to make it happen” success will surely follow.

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