

Article:

Performance change is key in any economy



Performance change is key in any economy

Ensuring that training addresses performance change is key in any economy. Doing more with less is just a bonus.

According to Synergyworks Research, companies that invest in training in down times tend to outperform their competition by as much as 4 to 1 in the long term. However, conducting quality training on an emaciated budget can be challenging.

With staff cuts and in efforts to cross-train existing staff, companies often grasp at resources to fill the gap, with varying degrees of success.

With cuts in staff and a wounded training budget, you undoubtedly have considered alternative methods to traditional training as a means of streamlining your efforts. Today, more than ever, viable alternative training resources exist and can certainly reduce training time and costs. Whatever venue you choose, to enhance and change performance, it requires a comprehensive approach tied to specific competencies.

You may have heard the term "blended learning". Blended learning is a terrific answer to tight budgets, tight time constraints when it is implemented correctly. Blended learning can be a mix of training venues and often incorporates a bit of e-learning.

Blended learning, however, does not mean blending a number of different training methods together. It means, developing a plan that incorporates different methods to affect performance. And, regardless of the venue, there are key pieces that are necessary to improve and sustain performance, not just conduct training. After all, you wouldn't expect a person to watch a video on golfing and expect them to be able to golf, right?

Yet, with adherence to sound design, alternatives to traditional training make sense and certainly can enable you to do more with less. Here are some guidelines for ensuring that any performance improvement efforts affect change.

Look at the Big Picture

To stay focused on the end results needed for success, start by defining competencies required for each individual job function. You might want to think of these as "ability" statements. Then, measure current skills and knowledge against those competencies. Doing so will accomplish several things:

- To ensure that you don't waste money on training that you don't need or that will not change long term performance. Why train every employee on every skill set required of their job if they are already proficient in some?
- To provide clarity of expectations for each employee. It's all about helping people perfect the skills necessary to perform optimally at their job and as a tool for career pathing.
- For Individual Development Plans and Re-Training – Outlining requirements for each position provides clarity for those that are interested in moving within the company, whether as promotion or laterally.
- Measure Success – How will you know that the training the you have introduced is successful if you don't first define the expected outcomes? Those outcomes should be linked specifically to behaviors for each job function.



Article:

Performance change is key in any economy



Select Training Interventions that Work

Changing behavior does not happen with a single event. Reading an article, participating in e-learning or watching a video does not constitute training and will not change behavior. Whether your training venue is live or electronic, it should follow sound adult learning methods that enable the participant to gain and reflect on knowledge, and apply to various situations and real life applications. Here are some guidelines for selecting training interventions and their usage:

- Reading a book, article or listening to a Podcast – these activities may provide valuable pre and post learning information or to keep up on the latest in your field. Don't expect behavioral change alone.
- Watching a video – Would you expect a new employee to watch a video on forklift operation and then just jump on? Videos are wonderful additions to training when placed appropriately. They may be used to gain information that is then used in practice. Or, they are commonly used to evaluate do's and don'ts of performance or procedures.
- E-mail tips and reminders – This is a great way to reinforce learning, but does not replace a training plan.
- E-learning – E-learning is a wonderful tool for providing training in a timely and efficient manner. Good e-learning engages the learner with visuals, explanation, practice exercises, games, simulated customer interactions and opportunities to apply the skills learned to their specific job requirements. Avoid e-learning that is just text on screen. It does little more than reading a book or watching a video in terms of changing behavior.
- Live training and workshops – Live training has gotten a bad wrap, mainly because of the length and breadth of topics covered in a single sitting. Live training can be extremely effective given the aforementioned adult learning principles. Just focus on one or two topics at a time to be effective. To accelerate learning and decrease classroom time, consider pre and post session reading and activities to jump start the session. Use your valuable face time for reflection, role play and other practice exercises.
- Webinars and Web Coaching Meetings- Real-Time meetings held via web meeting software can be highly efficient for reinforcing training concepts, collaboration and coaching. These are great venues for learners to share

Provide Training In Modular Format with Corresponding Coaching

Retention and application to the job are increased by as much as 70% when learners concentrate on one or two skills at a time with time between training to apply what they learned. This applies to any viable training venue. This is especially true when learners receive specific coaching on the topics learned. With any training intervention, supply coaches with guidelines for recognizing desired behavioral change, suggestions for reinforcing the behaviors and group coaching ideas.

Measure Results

There are four things that are measured in terms of behavioral change:

- **Reaction** – Did the learner like the training and feel it was relevant? These are the smiley sheets that you fill out after a training event and are important. If a participant does not like the training or find it relevant, then they certainly won't attempt to use it!
- **Did the learn it?** – This is pre and post session knowledge assessment. This is why it is important to clearly define these per competency before you design your training plan.
- **Are the Using It?** – This is typically measured via post session application survey asking learners to respond and give examples of how they have changed behaviors. This can also be assessed via observation, 360 and other means.
- **What difference did it make?** – Expected outcomes should be defined in stage one. Then, you can measure against them. Depending on what you are measuring, you don't always want to look at pure numbers. For instance, if a salesperson tells me that they landed a competitive account worth \$500,000. that they wouldn't have considered calling on prior to learning new skills, that is a direct measure from the training. Or, if employees tell you through employee interviews or survey, that after effective feedback training, a manager is much more responsive and caring at work, that's a quantifiable!

Performance change is key in any economy

