

Why Training Doesn't Work

7 Reasons Why Training Programs Fail and What You Can do About It



1. Training is Change

From management's perspective training is a necessary investment to give employees the skills they need to improve their performance and achieve better results. From the employee's perspective, training means they have to change and will resist it as they would any other new initiative.

2. The Word "Training"

The word 'training' implies that the person needs to be "trained," which creates resistance. Training is often associated with doing things in a rigid and specific way, such as training dogs and horses.

3. The Subtext: "I'm doing it wrong."

If we are asking someone to do something differently, some employees infer that the real message is that they aren't doing their jobs well. Most employees take a great deal of comfort and pride doing their jobs a certain way. The suggestion they need to do it differently, can be threatening to their self-esteem and need for security, thereby generating even more resistance.

4. Scheduling Training without Input

Some companies or managers send people to a seminar or training program with little or no regard for the individual's schedule or interest in attending. This can be a fatal mistake. Anyone who feels they are being "forced" to do something will instinctively resist it.

5. Low Trust Environment

In a low-trust environment, it is virtually impossible for training to have positive effect. Applying a training solution to a culture with trust problems won't improve the situation; it will make it worse.

6. Lack of Follow Through

Failure to reinforce new ideas or practices virtually assures they will die a quick death. Companies ignore more than 90 percent of ideas offered in training programs or seminars. Binders are stashed away on a shelf and never opened again.

7. Lack of Enthusiasm

Positive emotion is the "secret ingredient" to any successful new adventure—it's the emotional fuel to make any change successful. If the culture is negative or resistant to the new approach, chances of a successful implementation are very low.

Keys to Successful Learning Programs

1. Create the right Environment

In children, the social and emotional environment is the key to learning and it's no different for most adults. If we feel good about the situation and the people we're with, we are open to learning new things. An effective training program has to establish this environment right from the start. Growing and learning should be an integral part of the organizational culture.



2. Make it Exciting

Positive emotional involvement is essential to any successful development program. Participants must be personally motivated to learn. Eliminate the word training, call it a professional development program, offer official certifications and tie in rewards.

3. Practice, practice, practice

One of the biggest weaknesses in any organization is that professional development isn't integral and ongoing. The only way to master what we do is to practice it continually. Professional sports team's practice every day—and they are the best in the world at what they do! Perhaps practice has something to do with it.

4. Bridge the "Great Divide"

When appropriate, have managers and employees participate in the same program together. This creates a shared sense of purpose and reduces or eliminates the "us vs. them" challenge that exists in many organizations.

5. Translate New Skills into Goals

Any new skills learned in training should be tied into the organization's mission and the specific person's responsibilities. In other words, each person should be help accountability for whatever skills or behavior changes. The new skills should be simple and measurable.

6. Management Reinforcement

Once you've identified the critical skills needed, ensure they are constantly reinforced an integrated into the job on an ongoing basis through practice and accountability.

7. Make it Interactive

Adult learners require a high-degree of interactivity. The instructor must have the ability to keep participants involved in all phases of the program.