

Great Training Does Not Have to Happen in a Classroom

Training is one of those words that have numerous connotations associated with it. When we first think of training we often envision an instructor behind a podium imparting his or her wisdom, and then assuming students will have the foresight to apply the principles back in the real world. Second, training is often perceived as an expense that is hard to quantify. Third, training takes on the persona the instructor better be good, or the training process will be not be effective. In addition, it is perceived to be time intensive and not palatable when considering how to apply the training to the real world.

Well, none of these assumptions or presumptions has to be true. Training or learning does not have to take place in a classroom, and it does NOT have to be solely the instructor's responsibility. There is a way to reduce management time, decrease long-term training costs, and ultimately turn employees into high performers who, believe it or not, manage their own learning. You may be asking yourself, "How does this take place?"

Actually, very simply, with a revolutionary concept called "Self-Directed Learning". This extraordinary concept is taking the training learning world by storm. Learning is the key word with this concept; it imposes ultimate responsibility of the process on the employee. The employee is responsible for their own learning, versus an instructor having to train them.

So, "what exactly is Self-Directed Learning?" It's a process that utilizes short techniques in 15 to 45 minute sessions geared toward simulating the required skills of a specific job function. The activities are performed on a continuous basis such as daily or bi-daily. Once the activities are completed, points are rewarded to track the progress of each employee. Many organizations will award employees by the accumulating points or achieving specific milestones to encourage the self-learning.

Next, the major factor in developing a successful self-directed learning program is using the proper techniques to achieve the desired outcomes. The following are some of the most common areas of training and how specific, self-directed learning techniques can enable successful learning to take place outside of the classroom:

1. Product Training – An employee could demo or teach the basic elements or components of a product and then have the employee teach it back. After all, it has been proven that to truly know something is to have the ability to teach it.

2. Industry Knowledge – An employee could be provided with reading materials on the industry, with the ultimate expectation they will either email a supervisor what they learned or present the concept to management.



3. Soft Skills – soft skills such as listening and presentation skills can be role-played by using specific scenarios that apply to the real world.

4. positive Behavior – Modeling is a technique where an employee observes another employee who represents the positive behavior. A second facet of this technique is to then have the employee act out the modeled behavior.

5. industry Workshops / Certifications – If employees need to go a public workshop or industry certification, you can leverage this event by making them email 3 things they learned or teach their peers in small groups what they learned & how they can apply the techniques to their jobs.

Designing a self-directed learning program is a relatively straightforward process. Any manager can learn the self-directed learning concept and how to successfully apply it. The key factor of a self-directed learning system is to match the activities with desired outcomes. The learning activities must produce activities or practices that are desired from a results perspective. In designing these activities if management is involved, the cost can be minimal.