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Building Your Business with Training

Many of us grew up believing a common misconception: we'd graduate from either high school or college, get a job, and then our studying days would be over. No more cramming, no more exams, no more formal education.

But that's not how the business world operates, is it? To stay competitive in today's business environment, everyone has to continually learn. (There's even a term for this: the lifelong learner.) This is especially true regarding technology. Don't believe me? Remember DOS? Remember WordStar? Once, these were computer mainstays; now they're technology relics.

The way to stay competitive today is with employee and management training. Good training, on an ongoing basis, can pay huge dividends to your organization. The following are critical areas to consider in your ongoing training efforts.

Understand Adult Learners

In grade school, learning was very directed: everyone learned the same information at basically the same time. This doesn't work for adults. Study after study has shown that the adult learner is motivated by the acquisition of knowledge and wants that information now. In other words, the adult learner wants information specific to his or her needs, and wants the information in an easily understood format.

Adult students also learn in different ways. These include:

- Some individuals learn best in a group setting. These people should utilize workshops.
- Some learn best on their own. This type could use manuals or online tutorials.

Others learn best with hands-on experience. For these people, online training programs or lab settings are the answer.

When considering training options, first learn what methods employees and managers prefer. You should also make available a mix of training options, so different learning styles are accommodated.

Online Instructor-Led Training

While traditional instructor-led training has many benefits, it also has a huge disadvantage: the costs involved in bringing together one or more instructors with the students. These costs include travel time (for both instructor and students) and the time lost when employees are out of the office both attending and traveling to and from the training.

Today's technology, however, offers a solution. Utilizing special software and the Internet, virtual classrooms can be created in which the students stay at their desks and still receive live instruction. With live online training, the instructor can do most, if not all, of what she would do in a traditional classroom setting—demonstrate applications, answer questions, monitor student comprehension, and keep the class lively—without the excessive travel and lost-work costs.

To locate live, online instructor-led classes for your organization, ask your hardware and software vendors, check with colleagues, even call your local community college. When reviewing online classes, look for a variety of subject matters and available times and dates.

Training Never Ends

The business world is constantly changing, which requires your organization to make lifelong learning a necessity, not a luxury. You can take your business to the next level with employee and management training. The investment in time and money will be recouped many times.

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