

Plantline Management Column

Submitted by Keith Ayers

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Don't Waste Your Money on Training That Doesn't Work!

I have been in the training industry as a consultant for 23 years and I see many companies pouring money down the drain on training that has no chance of working.

Then they get disillusioned and stop training. At the same time, most organisations want to get better performance out of their people! But how can you do that without training them?

Some years ago I read a book entitled *Transfer of Training* that identified the primary causes why training doesn't work. The authors, Mary Broad and John Newstrom, found that the key factors that prevented training from being effective were related to the manager of the person being trained and had very little to do with the training program itself because:

1. Before people go off to training most managers do not take the time to determine exactly what it is that the person needs to learn and ensure that the employee knows why they are going.
2. Sufficient research is not done to ensure that the training program they are going to is in fact what they need to attend.
3. Managers do not take time after the employee returns to work to discuss what they have learned and assist them in applying it back in their job.

I would go even further and say that many managers are avoiding their responsibilities in developing their people, and they think that by sending people off to a training program they have solved the problem.

In most cases it does not solve the problem because the purpose of training is to change behaviour... and ***behaviour change takes time!***

You can't expect someone to change the habits of a lifetime after just one or two days of training. And that is precisely why I believe that managers and supervisors should be responsible for training or coaching their own people. They are there on the spot to identify what knowledge, skills or competencies are needed, and they are in a position to provide the ongoing coaching and review to ensure that the new skills are transferred into the workplace.

Midway through 1999 I wrote about the impact of a *happy workplace* on productivity and profitability. I quoted from a BRW article that published research from the Gallup organisation that supports my view, that the direct manager or supervisor is the key to improving employee productivity.

The Gallup research identified twelve things that were key questions on employees' minds that have a direct impact on their performance. They are:

1. Do I know what is expected of me?
2. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?
3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
4. In the past seven days, have I received recognition or praise for good work?
5. Does my supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about me as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?
7. At work, do my opinions seem to count?
8. Does the mission of my company make me feel like my work is important?
9. Are my co-workers committed to doing quality work?
10. Do I have a best friend at work?
11. In the past six months, have I talked with someone about my progress?
12. At work, have I had the opportunity to learn and grow?

(From *Workplace: The Secret of a Happy Office*, BRW June 11, 1999)

Corporate decisions or policies affect only items 2 and 8. The rest are directly impacted by the immediate work group and the environment created by the manager or supervisor.

But Don't Expect the Impossible

Managers can't be expected to become the mentor and coach who will create the *great place to work* or develop and train their own people unless they themselves have the skills needed.

And sending managers off to a basic supervision program or Management Development 101 won't achieve a thing. *Behaviour change takes time...* especially a change as significant as management style.

So what am I suggesting?

Invest in your managers and supervisors, but don't expect a once off training event to achieve anything. Develop long term development plans for your managers and supervisors... then you can expect a significant return on your investment.

Over the years we have been working with managers we have identified fifty competencies that managers need to be able to bring out the best performance in themselves and their work teams.

If you are interested in a copy of these competencies and how you can assess your managers contact me kayers@integro.com.au or phone my office on the number below.

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