

Though times are tough, TIM BRYANT explains why training budgets should not suffer from 'red pencil' treatment.

Why training is



Training has traditionally been an oh-so-easy target for cost-saving in economic downturns. And there are still those who stubbornly argue that it's a waste of money to train employees only to have them 'poached' by business rivals.

But for companies poised with their red pencils over training budgets during the current recession, it's worth bearing in mind the words of Microsoft founder Bill Gates: "Don't

worry that an employee will leave after training them. Worry about not training them and staying."

So what exactly are the benefits that effective training can offer?

Attitude and morale

An individual may have the appropriate levels of knowledge and skills required to do the job, but simply choose to mix their capability with an inappropriate or negative attitude. As automotive retailing is

fundamentally a service business, the 'how you are treated' is even more important than simply 'completing the task'.

Individuals who are highly skilled and confident are generally more satisfied and positive in their jobs. This reduces the risk of work-related stress and improves the overall work environment.

By investing in their personal training and development, employees feel:

your flexible friend

- That their employer has confidence in them to do the job.
- That the business values them and is giving something back to them.

As a result, employees will become self-starters and develop further competencies such as leadership and teambuilding and be more willing to undertake further training.

Training is also a perfect opportunity for employees to get to know their peers and colleagues better, and an opportunity to develop stronger working relationships and networks.

Staying competitive

Successful businesses are continually reviewing and adapting their working practices and infrastructure to stay competitive in the marketplace and meet with their customers' changing needs. Training staff to manage the arrival of new technologies, processes and strategies is increasingly critical for ongoing success and survival.

More flexibility

Training increases the overall skill set of your workforce, enabling it to engage in a wider range of tasks and responsibilities as and when required.

Greater confidence and motivation leads employees to become less reliant on management and supervision. Training in generic skills, not just those specific to the motor industry, can aid the potential for workforce flexibility. Employees who receive such training often

achieve improvements in:

- Communication skills
- Professionalism
- Conscientiousness
- Creativity and innovation

The benefits of a trained workforce flow through to customers who become even more satisfied with the improved level of service.

Turnover and recruitment

Studies of training across many developed nations reveal that organisations with lower staff turnover also spend the most on training and education.

Clearly, minimising the disruption caused by staff turnover will benefit your organisation. Replacing staff is a costly process – skills are lost, resources are disrupted and recruiting new personnel takes time and money.

Employees who receive ongoing training are more likely to commit to their employers because it develops their careers and potential for advancement and enables them to take on greater responsibilities with more confidence.

Measuring potential candidates against existing competencies already delivered within your training programmes also streamlines the recruitment process and can reduce the length of the induction period.

The flow-on effect

The benefits of training in one area can flow through to many related levels of a business. Over time, training can boost the bottom line

and reduce costs by decreasing:

- Wasted time and unnecessary use of materials.
- Recruitment costs through the internal promotion of skilled staff.
- Absenteeism, through improved levels of morale and motivation.

From 'training' to 'learning'

'Training' is about the organisation's needs. 'Learning' is about the individual's needs. 'Training' can often be perceived as something that only happens to a person whilst at work. In contrast, 'learning' is perceived as something that people pursue by choice at their own cost in their own time.

'Learning' extends the idea of personal development into the wider realms of beliefs, values, emotional intelligence and integrity. The secret is to tap into these individual areas of personal development and align them with the strategic objectives of your business.

When businesses seek to develop their people as people, and not simply as their resources or employees, they create far greater congruence between work itself and people's actual lives.

In doing so, they provide much more meaning and job satisfaction for individuals, naturally improving their overall confidence levels and ensuring that they are consistently motivated to perform at their best every day.

This is the ultimate benefit that effective training offers. Try it and both employees and customers will thank you. **MIM**



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