

absolutely business



Training? Don't waste your money!

By Denise Walker FREC

To train or not to train: that is the question often posed by my clients when they are looking for ways to improve their sales performance. The fact of the matter is that, when done properly, there is no doubt that there is a direct correlation between training and the bottom line. And, for the recruitment industry, the impact that training brings can be much more significant than in any other sector I know.

Considering there are numerous stages to the recruitment process and that each of these is fundamental to the quality of the service – which in turn, affects sales – it makes sense to ensure your recruiters are given the right tools for the job from the start of their career with you and that they are given every opportunity to get it right.

But it's not just the quality of service and the bottom line that get a boost from training; a quick glance at the increasing number of top calibre recruitment companies, on the Sunday Times Best Companies To Work For lists, provides clear evidence that the cream of our industry knows very well that the ROI of people development is massive – and key benefits include the ability to attract great staff and keep them. From the stringent criteria of these lists, it is also clear that they understand the need to invest in training and that they embrace this concept as part of their overall staff development programme.

Despite all that, my answer to the question “should we train?” is not always an emphatic “Yes”! Because, before investing, it is crucial to make sure you know exactly what it is that you want to achieve and that the solution is the most appropriate, otherwise you could end up demotivating your staff and wasting your money (and let's face it, any training that is worth having, isn't going to be cheap!).

So, presuming you know you have a need and what you'd like to achieve from your investment, I recommend that you give careful consideration to the following:

1. Buy in

How will you get buy-in from your staff? It can be soul-destroying for both the delegate and the trainer, when the only reason someone is on a course is “because my manager told me I had to come”. For results-orientated recruiters, any time away from the desk must be for the right reasons – to enhance performance and help them reach their goals - and not just learning for learning's sake.

2. The course

Is the course content exactly what you need? Can you speak with the trainer to get a realistic idea of what it entails (not just the marketing blurb) and is it possible to speak with people who have been on the course previously, so that you can get an idea of the real effects the training has had?

Is the type of course right for you? I've seen some great results from quick, two-hour seminars and public courses, where part of the learning includes learning from other delegates from different companies and backgrounds. Courses leading to qualifications help to engender a sense of professionalism and certainly help with credibility. And in-house, bespoke training can help to create a sense of company identity, confidentiality and uniqueness, in addition to being more specific to the company's needs.

Will the course style be the most suitable to your staff and company culture? Do your team relate best to an interactive, lecture, workshop or seminar environment?

3. The trainer

How can you be sure that the trainer is right for your team? Is it possible for you to meet them beforehand to ensure they are going to "click"?

4. Follow up

I firmly believe that training is only as good as its follow up; if you depend on a course alone, delegates are likely to retain no more than 20% of the learning, whereas reinforcing it with follow-ups will ensure that less is lost. But if you really want to maximise the effect of the learning, finding ways of embedding it in your culture and continuing to reinforce it on a day-to-day basis is key to achieving this.

I have seen some recruitment companies, of all sizes, in which this has been achieved extremely well but it is not easy and requires a consistent, systematic effort.

5. Continuity

How will you ensure continuity, for example, methods of ensuring new employees know "this is what we do around here" and are not excluded from the learning? Does your induction training cover this or should you revise it?

And even if you do achieve all the above, at the end of the day, the rate of the ROI will be greatly influenced by a number of other factors, such as the alignment of internal processes with the learning and, perhaps most importantly, your managers' people development abilities – including on the job training and coaching.

So, before you decide to "do some courses", I suggest that, in order for you not to waste your money, great training should not be just for the duration of the course; for it to work properly, it should simply be a way of life.

About Denise Walker FREC

Denise Walker owns and runs Absolutely Business, a specialist management consultancy, designed exclusively for the recruitment industry, delivering **business consultancy, interim management and training services**.

Contact

t 0118 9821535 **e** denise@absolutelybusiness.co.uk **w** www.absolutelybusiness.co.uk