



Why Every Company Needs to Invest in Employee Training

Description

Employee training has moved beyond a “nice-to-have.” It has now become a “must-have.” There’s an increasing need for companies to invest in meaningful training for their people—a level of training that moves beyond technical skills and provides the kind of ongoing learning that makes them experts and even leaders. There are various reasons why.

One, the world is more complex and fast-paced than ever. Constant learning is needed just to keep up, let alone advance in one’s job.

Two, a great training system is a valuable talent attraction and retention tool. High performers expect to be developed. They want to be lifelong learners, to grow professionally, and to be deeply involved in shaping their company’s future.

Three, customers expect all employees to be deeply knowledgeable. They want trusted advisors who really know their stuff. This can happen only with serious training and development.

In Pensacola, Studer Community Institute (SCI) provides training to all types of businesses. We recently worked with Levin Rinke Realty, a top real estate brokerage in our area. They’ve enjoyed a lot of growth over the past eight years, but have really taken off in the past two or three years.

Three years ago, they were at \$340 million in sales. By the end of the year, they expect to achieve \$875 million in sales. And broker/owner Robert Rinke attributes their rapid growth to the fact that they’ve so heavily invested in industry and market training over the years. Their realtors are highly competent and are seen as trusted advisors. They really know what they’re talking about, and the client can sense that. It’s not something that can be faked.

Not long ago, they engaged SCI to do some further training. For training to work, it needs to be highly tailored. We did an assessment of their real estate brokerage so we’d know what they stand for, what they wanted to achieve—what their real needs were. It was a highly successful session.

A few takeaways from a recent conversation with Robert Rinke:

1. Training is very powerful when done in bite-sized pieces. For example, a lot of the industry training Levin Rinke has offered over the years has been in the form of very short three- to eight-minute videos. This helps make training almost a daily habit.
2. Training must be viewed by employees as part of the job. Rinke estimates that in the real estate industry, agents need to be engaged in three to four hours of training a week to keep up. Of course, a company can lay out training on a silver platter, but it's up to the individual to engage. This was a key focus of SCI's training session: how critical it is to engage, and stay engaged.
3. It's clear that those who choose to do the training thrive. Rinke reports that agents who consistently do the training saw their business increase over 90 percent during the last twelve months.
4. When you invest in employee training, other high performers want to work with you. It's a great attraction and retention tool.

So far we've been talking about the importance of training employees in general and using this real estate brokerage as a case study. But now I'd like to switch gears just a little and talk about a group I feel really needs focused training: middle managers.

I share in my presentations that whoever has the best middle management team wins. I also say that a way to measure the values of an organization is by their commitment to develop managers. This means scheduling development time and putting purposeful mentoring into place.

Being a middle manager is one of the toughest roles in an organization. Most people who end up in middle management were outstanding workers in the job they had before taking on this role. For example, in healthcare, the nurse who is outstanding clinically and is well liked by their coworkers is the one who becomes a middle manager. In law enforcement, it's the patrolman who has excellent skills with the public and is well respected by their peers.

While it is healthy at times to recruit from outside, in most high-performing organizations, about 80 percent of management jobs are filled from within. Employees who know the company and are respected by peers make good managers. Yet they need training. They have demonstrated they are good workers, but it's usually in different skills from those needed in the new role.

A new middle manager has most likely not prepared a budget, filled out a capital request, made final selection decisions, managed expenses for the department, fired someone, dealt with customer complaints, led process improvement efforts, or had to explain what is taking place. I learned when I served on the curriculum task force for Harvard Business School just how vital these skills are. They are the skills that graduates are expected to have.

Development of managers has always been very important, but this is now truer than ever before. The pandemic has caused many experienced leaders to decide to retire. This is causing some people to be put in manager positions much sooner than expected.

If you are in a management role, is your company investing in you? Are they providing time for you to learn leadership skills? If yes, send your supervisor and top leaders a note to say thank you. If no, you may need to do what many have done and seek development. It is better if all managers are learning together; however, if that is not possible, you will want to do so on your own.

Realize that development is not outside your scope of work. It *is* your job. A manager recently stated that going to training was getting in the way of their job. My first thought was they may not be ready to be a manager if they don't realize skill-building will make them better.

In the past few years, I created a collaborative leadership development tool. It lists key leadership skills and includes a process for each person to meet with their supervisor to go over how they are doing and what development they need. Contact me if you would like a copy.

Studer Community Institute provides lots of opportunities for people to acquire leadership skills. Having seen skill development all over the country, I know that what is offered here in Pensacola is among the best and the least expensive. It is wonderful to see people and organizations taking advantage of these opportunities.

What is shocking is how many organizations do not take advantage of such opportunities. I believe these leaders may not have had the opportunity to attend such training themselves. They may not understand the value. They may see development as an expense. It is an investment.

When I talk with business owners or senior executives, my message is that a key responsibility is to provide your workforce with great supervisors. It doesn't "just happen." I applaud those of you who are making sure your managers are receiving development. For those who aren't, I urge you to consider doing so. As Levin Rinke Realty's example shows, it pays off in a huge way.

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Author

quint-studer