

Ten Critical Training and Development Mistakes

Business leaders need to be aware of these issues that impact the bottom line.

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“Learning and Growth” is a fundamental pillar for balanced business performance. Business leaders can maximize the effectiveness of Training and Development (T&D) activities that support learning and growth objectives by avoiding these ten critical and common mistakes:

1 Viewing T&D as Tangential to the Business

Potential performance improvements that are neglected or mismanaged affect productivity. A productivity increase of only 5% (which is easily achievable), can have a major impact on the bottom line.

2 Leaving T&D in the Wrong Hands

Training and development should not be in the hands of Human Resources generalists who are not skilled specifically in T&D management. HR generalists also wear too many hats to provide the level of support and influence that effective T&D programs require. CEOs don't put their own professional development in the hands of HR generalists, so the same should apply to all employees.

3 Not Realizing the True Purpose of T&D

After an educational activity, three questions need to be asked, and the outcomes analyzed carefully: Did the behaviors change as we expected? What are the measurable results? And finally, were the employees satisfied with the activity? The main purpose of training and development is to change behaviors to improve results.

4 Wasting Money Because of an Ad Hoc Approach

Continuously improving staff performance is an important investment deserving of a systematic approach.

5 Not Enough Focus on Improving Weaknesses

Good managers know that pointing out opportunities for improvement in a tactful and effective way is part of the job, but it's a difficult responsibility that's often avoided.

6 Understaffing the “Training Department”

Companies that have grown to the point where one or two full-time training managers are employed experience an understaffed sentiment unless outsourcing part of the training *management* function is also included. A minimum of three training managers are needed to provide comprehensive services which include: a balanced assessment of company needs; providing adequate service to all business areas; obtaining access to the best training providers available to fulfill the needs; and ensuring that T&D efforts achieve measurable results. If a high level of service can't be achieved through a full-time training department, the missing T&D management functions should be outsourced.

7 Going the Cheap Route

“Good” training can definitely be obtained at low cost through local college

and university programs, small independent providers, and from larger providers that can deliver inexpensive programs due to high volume. Product development companies shouldn't go the cheap route. Research and product development environments are complex and expensive to operate, and professional development programs should be aligned with the demands that are unique to these companies.

8 A Narrow View of Important Competencies

Leadership, management, communications and technical competencies are broad categories that can take a lifetime of learning to master. Add to it, the full range of soft skills such as teamwork, conflict resolution, accountability and decision-making ability, and we need more than a lifetime to learn all of this. Business performance in this competitive world requires a broad range of skills, and sufficient depth in the most critical competencies.

9 Underestimating the Difficulty of Delivering Effective T&D Programs

Educational programs need three important ingredients: relevant content, good design, and strong delivery. Only the most skilled subject-matter-expert training professionals excel in all these areas.

10 Neglecting the Soft Skills

Poor collaboration and communication plagues most businesses, but it doesn't need to be this way – these competencies can be improved by engaging the appropriate experts.