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How to create a training process that actually works

Training your employees properly can pay off in the long run. It'll help your organization run smoothly and avoid costly mistakes.



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BY SHEA DRAKE--GLASSDOOR
5 MINUTE READ

I remember it like it was yesterday. I had been hired to be a product manager for an industrial e-commerce site. I had stated in my interview I wasn't familiar with the platform they were using, but that didn't seem to deter them from hiring me, telling me they'd train me. I was offered the job, accepted, and two weeks later found myself in a cubicle staring at a screen.

While I had been told I would be trained, it took a few hours for the trainer to come in and teach me about the platform I would be using. Throughout the training, he would occasionally say "I'm not sure about that thing, talk to so-and-so," before buzzing along to the next point to teach me. Within a half hour, he was gone and I was only slightly more informed than I began. I talked to the person he had said to talk to if I had questions, and that person did not give me any more information beyond, "Well, I wasn't really sure what I was doing, so I'm probably not the best person to ask." I set to work to learn.

Those first few months were a trial by fire, with many mistakes (some costly) made that I'd find for the next year or two, cursing my early ignorant days. I am not alone in that feeling either, one of the top 10 complaints about companies from employees is the [lack of training opportunities](#). The training had been fast and everything was out of order. All I had to rely on were my notes I took as he talked. I set to documenting each task, how to do it, screenshots, and troubleshooting so no one would have to go through that again. It made me realize the [value of training](#), and how managers and employees alike need to be prepared for it.

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TRAINING FOR EVERY LEARNER

Let's focus on four common types of learners: auditory, visual, writers/readers, and kinesthetic. Auditory learners learn best by hearing, visual learners do best by seeing, writers and readers do best by reading, and kinesthetic learners learn best by doing. While people may lean towards one way of learning over another, most people will learn best through a combination of these.

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As I learned through my own experience, someone talking to me and walking me through a hypothetical scenario did help me to learn, but still left me with terrible gaps and no resources to turn to. Even if you have stacks of training documents for employees to search through, that doesn't mean everything will start making sense to them.

Multiple formats to include for your training materials:

Written documents detailing a process. These can be short or long depending on the subject matter. It should be properly formatted so it's not only easy to read and digest, but employees can also easily search through the document to find the specific part they're having trouble with.

Screenshots or video of said processes. These are supplementary for your visual learners. These back up the written details in the document. These are particularly helpful for remote workers. While you may not have many remote employees yet, the remote-working trend has grown by 103% since 2005, so it's smart to have trainings that can be helpful for those in the office and those at home.

A dedicated person who can answer questions during the training period. Too often companies say, "Ask someone on the team if you have a question." This is a terrible waste of time for multiple people. What one person is an expert in, another person may only have a basic knowledge of themselves. Have a few trusted employees who are happy to mentor and also have time to mentor for specific tasks, otherwise, you'll have one employee interrupting others workflow.

A time to follow up on training. Set up a time within the next few weeks after the initial training to follow up with your employee to see what they retained and what they have questions on. Now that they've had time to try things out on their own, they'll be better prepared to ask more meaningful questions or clear any remaining confusion.

Related: [3 reasons why having fewer responsibilities is good for your career](#)

HOW TO KEEP IT PAINLESS

As soon as you mention training in a room you can often see eyes glaze over or glance towards their cellphone, fingers twitching. While training may not ever be something to be excited about, engagement can definitely be improved upon.

Here's how to keep it painless and cost-effective.

Section it out into tasks but keep them short. If it takes an hour to go over before the person even has a chance to try out any of the concepts, your training is too long.

Keep it flexible, rigidity is the enemy to learning. Have the essential learnings and how you plan to teach them but include time for questions and adaptation if things don't go how you think they will. Geraldine Joaquim of Mind Your Business sums this up best, "A good trainer will 'read' the audience and know if they need to tailor their talk, perhaps emphasizing certain aspects that will garner more engagement in the subject. This doesn't mean they miss parts of the core content, but there is no point laboring on an area that is causing yawns!"

Engage, engage, engage. Out of 1,000 office workers, 33% said they wanted hands-on experience with what they were being trained on. Your employees will be more likely to retain their knowledge if they are actively doing the work as it's being taught to them. Include time to let them try out concepts, ask them questions, make sure they are on the right path.

Take breaks and be social. All work and no play makes anyone a dull person, so don't be afraid to share stories, ask the employees about them, and ask some questions after every section or before starting the next section. Even though training can be boring, that doesn't mean you have to be too.

Related: [5 ways new managers can protect themselves from burning out](#)

How does your training process stack up? Are you guilty of dropping a pile of documents on new hires? Or do you use a combination of these tips and strategies to set your new employees up for success? In any case, use this time to re-examine your processes. Ask existing employees what they wish they knew when they first started, and after each round of training, continue to ask for constructive feedback on how to improve your processes. Pretty soon, you'll be finding reviews on Glassdoor about how well you prepare new employees for the job.

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