

## Don't Just Sit There Classroom Training Doesn't Ensure Competence

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The scenario is all too common: an employee makes a critical misstep in his day-to-day duties — a mistake that leads to a serious injury, or even loss of life.

"But they were trained," the manager responsible for the employee in question might object. Trained, indeed — but were they competent in their job function?

This situation, a regular occurrence in workplaces around the world, speaks to a widespread and persistent discrepancy in many conventional approaches to training management: the gulf between simply delivering training and ensuring actual competency.

Most organizations that have achieved sustained success know the value of a comprehensive training program. Streamlined onboarding of new employees and sustained training throughout the course of their professional development can, when delivered effectively, ultimately lead to a more effective workforce and, most importantly, greater retention rates. After all, while it can be very expensive to recruit, train, support and develop employees, any seasoned business owner knows it is phenomenally expensive to lose those employees.

However, too often employers equate training with competency, a wholly inaccurate presumption. Some traditional views on training can be described by the following misconceptions:

- Any training is good training, so a business ought to train for the sake of training.
- By simply having employees 'sit in a classroom', competence is engendered.
- Making training material available is sufficient to induce learning.
- Subject-matter experts are deemed able to train other staff based on tenure (that is, the notion that longer-serving employees are more capable of delivering training).
- That robust training is not necessarily worth the investment and ROI is too difficult to capture.

As with the mistaken belief that training is tantamount to competence, all these assumptions lead to false conclusions. But above and beyond how these misconceptions are engendered it is important to clarify what is actually meant by competence in an organizational context. Essentially, 'competence' refers to an employee's ability to do their job properly. But establishing competency within an organization is not something that just happens, nor is it something that will be necessarily produced by the provision of an otherwise robust and seemingly comprehensive training program. Instead, a systematic approach featuring a nuanced training strategy is an essential prerequisite for employee competence.

Competency certainly sounds like something that would be an advantageous element to cultivate within a corporate culture, if not an essential element of doing business.

However, the intrinsic value of a training program that engenders competency is not always immediately apparent to upper management whose buy-in is critical to the success of any training strategy.

### **Safety & Job Satisfaction**

The benefits of a training program that cultivates true competence are multifaceted and impact all aspects of corporate performance. On a day-to-day basis, competence reduces the probability of errors in all job functions, thereby boosting productivity and profitability. From a corporate perspective, every organization has a moral, business and legal obligation to their employees in terms of education, and a good training strategy will address each facet in a comprehensive way. For example, an organization has a moral obligation to ensure employees are sufficiently trained in their job function so as not to suffer injuries or encounter preventable illnesses on the job. In business terms, should an employee get injured or sick at work there is the potential of a variety of costs that may impact the organization's bottom line, including claims, lost time, and fines associated with regulatory infractions. And from a legal perspective, if an employee is injured in, say, a manufacturing setting, they could launch a lawsuit against the organization asserting that they were insufficiently trained. In such a situation, if the organization could not produce documented evidence to clearly prove the employee was provided with required training, it may be on the hook for substantial damages and other consequences, not to mention unavoidable legal fees.

Beyond the business-critical advantages to a comprehensive training strategy outlined above, a powerful byproduct of such an approach is, quite simply, that a competent employee is a happy employee. By ensuring employees are fully prepared to appropriately fulfill all of their job requirements, they suffer less stress over the tactical elements of their job, and enjoy greater confidence and increased motivation to do their job better. Further, organizations that take a holistic, continual approach to training and skill-building will ultimately cultivate the sentiment among its workforce that the employer genuinely cares for the employee. While this all leads a higher level of morale among staff and an enhanced focus on quality, the most notable benefit is that retention rates will be greatly improved, and attrition rates will fall. Happy, competent employees who feel they are adequately equipped to excel in their duties are less inclined to leave their organization and more inclined to contribute to their employer's success.

While a high level of employee competence makes the difference between a simply serviceable workforce and one that truly excels, many might contest that achieving competence is easier said than done. This is true; properly training staff can be a significant burden on any organization. Simply providing training, tracking training, and measuring competence post-training involves substantial costs, multiple dedicated, full-time trainers, depending on the organization's size – burdens that are significantly reduced if not entirely eliminated for organizations that use the right training tracking and management software. Coupling these software tools with a training strategy will generate results for any organization of any size, under any budgetary constraints.

**Start with the training strategy.** Conduct a basic needs assessment to define what the requirements are for all employee groups and determine resource and content

availability so you know who is available to provide training and what materials exist or need to be created. The results of these investigations will inform your implementation strategy. Plan to leverage training management software to execute your strategy, and ensure it is scalable software that can accompany corporate growth.

**Evaluate your time constraints and resources.** Do you need an employee up and running as soon as possible, or can your training resources take time to train the individual and gradually integrate him or her into the workforce? If you don't want to hire and maintain a team of trainers to implement your training plan and conduct training and competency exercises as your organization grows, use a training software tool. Yes, training and competency-building is a significant investment, but it cannot be reiterated enough how time-consuming and resource-heavy thorough training can be without streamlined software. Even the simple act of tracking training manually — that is, without a training tracking tool — will eat up unnecessary resources on a daily basis and grind your training program down to a lumbering pace.

Define goals and track progress. While this may be one of the most crucial aspects in a successful training strategy, it is also one of the most overlooked. Business leaders often think that training is nebulous and too difficult to track, and this factor might be the greatest contributor to the gulf between training and competence described above. Yet it is quite simple to track the success of a training strategy. Get a training software solution that can capture and streamline key performance indicators (KPI), such as dates and times for training, instructors, cost per delivery, attendance, and accountability. It is also ideal to have functionality to automatically assign courses (e.g. Brian is hired in the manufacturing department and automatically assigned a group of required courses), reminders and escalations, generate reports, and produce detailed analytics on training performance. Critically, you'll want the capacity to generate customized quizzes to test employees on course content to ensure they have actually absorbed required information. This step is generally overlooked, yet is one of the most crucial aspects of building competency as opposed to having employees simply 'sit in a classroom'. Notably, possessing all of these documented metrics will help you circumvent potential legal calamities by enabling you to easily prove all employees were thoroughly trained.

An underlying component to a successful training strategy is buy-in, and not just from senior management and those that hold the purse strings, but across the entire organization. As you prepare your training strategy, create case studies, define scenarios that illustrate the consequences of compromised training – as well as the costs, time and resources associated with a manual training management system as opposed to a software-based system – and calculate training ROI to build a convincing case for a streamlined, competency-focused training strategy.

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## **International Yoga Day**

**June 21, 2017**

✓ The United Nations has declared June 21 as the International Day of Yoga. One should make this day into a major offering of yoga and a possibility for people of all age groups, religions, nationalities and social backgrounds to experience meditateness, expanding their perception of life from individuality to universality.

*Just five minutes a day can transform your life. Whether you are seeking health and joy or peace and love, whether it is success in the world or inner exploration you are striving for, these simple practices are designed to help you cut through the struggle and walk through life with ease.*

### *Benefits of Yoga:*

- ✓ *Enhances vitality, focus, memory & productivity;*
- ✓ *Strengthens and stabilizes the spine; Can relieve back pain, stress, anxiety and tension;*
- ✓ *Can provide relief from chronic ailments and improve overall health;*
- ✓ *Enhances teamwork and communication;*
- ✓ *Imparts a lasting sense of joy, peace and fulfillment.*

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