

Train to Gain

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As you plan for 2009 in the midst of some uncertainty, you ask “How can I keep a well trained, motivated, engaged workforce?” Training is a competitive advantage no matter the size of your company. This is well documented with research indicating that business’s revenues and overall profitability are positively correlated to investments made in training and development. Based on my own experience being in the field for over ten years, training makes a difference in performance, motivation, morale, and retention. Well trained, valued, motivated employees always perform better and feel better about their work and their company. That will translate to coming out ahead during tough times. Your employees will appreciate your investment in their development, and will remember that you demonstrated how much you valued their contributions through good and tough times.

So how can you train to gain a competitive advantage in tough times? Here are some ideas that I call “budget friendly”:

Shorten the time. In other words, if you typically pay for programs that are three to five days in length, try a one or two day program. Webinar and teleseminars are another alternative to more traditional day long or longer programs. These are typically an hour in length and far less expensive. The other option is a “pay per use” or library of several topics and you select what’s relevant and pay per user, or per use fee.

Identify the lulls. Have your employees identify “lulls” in their day or week. These are slow periods of time that can be turned into training opportunities. This is a great way to cross train your staff. If you have several departments determine if there are patterns of slow periods and take advantage of cross functional training.

Leverage informal learning. Most learning (70%) is done informally, so this is a prime opportunity to promote informal learning.

Mentor Programs. Mentor programs are a timeless approach to individual career development, knowledge sharing, and leadership development. They can be informal and formal; both create extraordinary learning experiences that benefit the mentor relationship as well as the company. This is an excellent opportunity to share knowledge, expertise, and experiences across generations.

Group Coaching. When it comes to coaching we immediately think individual coaching. Group coaching is much more scalable because you can affect more people in a shorter amount of time and it is less costly.

All of these ideas don’t compromise quality for “budget friendly” solutions and will help you maintain a competitive advantage.

Comments are always welcome to the author; you may contact Carol Heady at 845-226-8047 or email her at carol@learningandperformance.net. Carol is President of Learning and Performance Solutions, a management consulting business focused on maximizing people’s potential through skills training, leadership and management development programs, and individual and group coaching.