

Experts Reveal the Most Valuable Training Tools

By Jennifer LeClaire, an L2S contributing writer

Training programs are a valuable way for companies to help their employees grow, and in turn, help the business grow. There are countless strategies for training employees, including Internet-based, classroom and hands-on approaches.

Online training services like The PricewaterhouseCooper Virtual University and The Employee Training Institute offer cutting-edge convenience to both employers and employees.

Patricia Clason, Director of The Center for Creative Learning, says allowing employees to learn at their own time and pace, rather than forcing them into a rigid schedule, can be the determining factor of whether or not an employee participates in a training program at all. "If Internet training utilizes as many learning intelligences as possible ... and teaches principles so that students can apply them to their unique situations, then Internet learning can and will work," she explains.

Experts say Internet-based training will not likely replace the classroom environment, but can act as an effective learning tool. Traditional classroom training continues to be the choice of many major U.S. corporations, and observers note that one key to success with this approach lies in continuing education. Clason suggests that ongoing classes, which allow employees to express feedback on the learning curve, are more effective than "one-shot" sessions. "Employees then have a chance to combine on-the-job experience and classroom feedback from peers and experts," she explains.

However, new research reveals personal experience wins hands down over seminars

and workshops as the best way for employees to develop expertise and good judgment, say Barry Scheckley and Marijke Kehrhahn, professors of educational leadership at the University of Connecticut. They've spent 10 years studying how businesses can help employees grow, and say time and time again employees tell them that experience is the best teacher. Classroom sessions are useful, say Scheckley and Kehrhahn, but they normally don't provide the information employees need to do their jobs.

Clason agrees with the professors' theory. "Experience is the best teacher because it usually impacts a person on all learning levels," she says. "If you are comparing lectures to experience, experience wins hands down." Clason reminds, however, that the most effective training approach will vary from person to person.

Scheckley says he is still in the beginning stages of his research, and has had just enough time to indicate positive trends toward his discovery. "One of our major problems is that businesses tend to be in such a state of constant turmoil that we frequently find that our initiatives, though successful, have to be curtailed because one or more key players has been transferred, promoted or downsized," he explains.

Training trends come and go, but Clason suggests a back-to-basics approach for most companies. "People learn best when information is logical, ethical and fun and when they can participate as much as possible in the learning experience," she explains. She also says success in training is dependent upon having a trainer who is willing to listen to the students and share wisdom specific to the employees' situations.

For additional reading on this topic, don't miss An Introspective Look at Corporate Training Philosophies on www.office.com.

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PATRICIA CLASON has been a professional speaker, trainer, consultant and writer for over twenty-five years. She is now the Director of the Center for Creative Learning which offers programs for personal and professional development at offices in Milwaukee and Madison, and Detroit. She has traveled across the continent doing over 3,000 presentations for corporations, associations, government agencies and non-profit organizations since 1975. Patricia has written many articles, training programs and personal growth seminars and has been a sought-after guest for radio and television.

The focus of her work is on alternative methods of teaching and learning that produce high quality results. Her search for the best in the technology of human resource development has taken her as a student on many adventures through traditional and some not-so-traditional training programs.

Currently she is the owner of three businesses, the Center for Creative Learning, Great Ideas! Speakers Bureau and Accountability Coaching Associates. As a consultant and coach to other businesses, large and small, in the areas of start-up, marketing, and management skills, she guides people to manifesting their dreams. Her articles often appear in business and trade publications and her column Ask the Coach appears monthly in the Employment Times.

To keep all this together, and still have time for her family and herself, Patricia must truly practice what she teaches in the areas of communication, time management, people management and motivation.

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