10 Tips for Building a Training Culture

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Having a strong organizational culture enables you to hire, conduct business and attract clients in a consistent way that aligns with your overall values.

With the fast pace of technological change today, a training culture can give you a competitive advantage when it comes to recruiting and retaining the best talent. Imagine that a quality candidate is considering your organization and another one, but you offer continuous training as a benefit. That will normally make the candidate's choice simple and obvious.

Investing in training for everyone in your organization shows them that you value their professional development and advancement potential.

According to Arie de Geus, head of Shell Oil Company's Strategic Planning Group and a visiting professor at London Business School, a learning culture is not only a strong source of sustainable competitive advantage; it is a critical corporate asset. He says, "Learning is the only source of sustainable competitive advantage."

Instead of investing in training once in a while — when someone requests it or when compliance requires it — make training a key element of your company's or firm's makeup.

So how do you build training into your culture in such a significant way that it defines your organization? Here are some tips to get started.

1. **Survey everyone in your organization to find out what types of training they want to take**. What skills do they want to improve, and what type of training do they prefer — online courses, webinars, on-site classes or off-site classes?

2. **Offer training to everyone**. Instead of focusing only on advisors, for example, offer training to managers and support staff as well.

3. **Hire a training manager.** Or assign the job of assessing, scheduling and evaluating training to one of your existing team members. This will show the people in your organization that you are committed to making training an integral part of your culture.

4. **Establish a mentoring program**. Have your senior advisors mentor newer advisors and offer jointwork arrangements. Consider participating in the MDRT/GAMA International Mentoring Program.

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5. **Create a coaching program**. Coach everyone. Many managers make the mistake of focusing their coaching efforts on the rookies or poor performers. Offer coaching to your top performers. They will value the extra guidance on top-level issues, and it's important to keep them happy.

6. **Leverage the expertise of your own people**. Build a company e-learning program that enables your more experienced team members to share their expertise with newer employees. Let them be the subject-matter experts who provide some of the training, and reward them for doing so.

7. **Offer training in both "hard" and "soft" skills**. Some of your team members need training in skillbased areas, while others probably need training in "soft" skills like negotiation, resolving conflicts and being more customer-focused.

8. **Attach specific goals to the training**. Ask every team member what he or she hopes to gain from the training and how it can also benefit the organization. After the training, have your managers find out to what extent the training lived up to those expectations. This will help you evaluate the ROI.

9. **Communicate and celebrate training outcomes**. If a training program was at least partially responsible for a team member being promoted, let everyone in the organization know about it. This is an effective way to reinforce the connection between the training you offer and the advancement of those who take the training.

10. **Measure the effectiveness of your training program**. Consider using a feedback app, which can contain different sets of several questions for different situations. You can repeat the questions at various intervals to create a trend analysis. Use a SharePoint-based intranet to help employees track the progress they make in implementing improvements.

Building a training culture requires an ongoing commitment and strategy. Unfortunately, too many agencies, firms and companies have a set-it-andforget- it formula, which does not move the needle in the proper direction. The rewards of establishing a training culture will help turn each of your top goals and objectives into reality, in increased productivity, expanded markets, recruitment and ultimately retention.

An Effective Training Platform for Managers and Advisors

An effective resource for training financial advisors is Hoopis Performance Network, which features online, on-demand, total video-based training built on four Disciplines of Success with access to more than 400 sessions. The coursework can be either self-study or facilitator-led, and it complements any firm, agency or company training programs and marketing selling systems. Your advisors can access the video training anytime, anywhere, on their computers, smartphones, or tablets. It's a cost-effective, time-efficient way to increase productivity, thus retention.

An effective resource for training new or experienced sales leaders is HPN, an innovative virtual platform designed for financial leaders who are building a region, an agency or firm, a sales unit, or a sales team. You can get access to hundreds of high-impact sessions for all levels of experience, divided into five distinct elements of success. These sessions are short and easily digestible, averaging less than 10 minutes. Your managers can access the video training anytime, anywhere, on their computers, smartphones, or tablets.

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