

Identifying Training Needs, the Key to Cost Effective Training and Development

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Identifying training needs may not be at the heart of every organisations priorities at present but, developing staff during a recession when redundancies have been made ensures consistent performance and engagement from those left behind.

It may sound like nonsense to continue to develop your staff during a downturn when money is scarce and the first thing to be cut is usually the Training budget but, to not develop your staff during a downturn leaves you vulnerable when the recovery begins. Customers shop around during a downturn to save money, those that maintain a development strategy will maintain their customer base and be in a strong position at the start of the recovery.

Development needn't be expensive or time consuming during a downturn or at any time. Bite-size learning can take place during meetings, notice boards can be utilised to carry important information.

Messages can be printed on pay slips or included with payslips.

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What a downturn does do is make your development more focused. You will still need to carry out the mandatory training, Health and Safety, First Aid etc. There are still changes in Employment Law that need to be communicated - the recent changes in employing someone from overseas has a major impact if ignored.

When a person has been made redundant but, the job has not, the tasks will need to be shared around those remaining. This may need further training to ensure that

1. The tasks can be fitted into their day
2. They are able to perform the extra tasks
3. They understand why these tasks have been allocated to them

Where the person and the job have been made redundant, nothing needs to be adapted. Those left behind will need coaching or counselling through the period after a round of large redundancies. Performance issues may arise, absences may increase and some will leave of their own accord.

Recruiting during a downturn needs to be done carefully and those doing the recruiting may need extra coaching as the recruiting arena has changed from a job seekers market to an employers market. This means that before the downturn, when unemployment was at a low those advertising vacancies had few applicants and those applying could pick and choose which job they took. Now that there are not so many vacancies employers have a greater job in picking the right candidate to fill a role. The number of applicants per vacancy will have risen.

If you are recruiting during a downturn, those doing the recruiting may need extra training as the recruiting arena has changed

Recruiting is a cost and to get it wrong in a downturn is an unbearable cost. Make the wrong decision based on the facts in front of you and you could be liable to an Employee Tribunal.

Refresher training for those recruiting need not be a long process. All that maybe required is a half day or one day workshop to recap and explain new rules and regulations.

Enhancing your employees Customer Service skills during a downturn could help maintain your customer base or improve it. Many people return, not because of price but, because of the service that they receive. In a downturn price is more important and if you can maintain the same level or offer more during a downturn this may swing the balance in your favour over a competitor who offers a cheaper product but not the same level of service.

Customer comments are always a source of identifying training needs with comments and suggestions on how service could be improved.

If you have an appraisal system in place, ensure that it is being used effectively and correctly. This is one area that managers can identify training and learning needs. Disciplinary hearings are another way of identifying training needs if you are running disciplinary hearings for the same thing over and over it may indicate a training need. This will save time on two counts

1. No more disciplinary hearings for that offence
2. Training has been identified with no further investigation

Identifying training needs in a downturn will enable your organisation to come out stronger with prepared employees to continue to grow and expand your organisation.

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Managers will need training in coaching to improve employee engagement during the downturn. Your Managers will need to be informed so that they can inform. They need to exhibit the behaviours that are expected of their employees.

Identifying Training and Learning needs is a valuable part of the development and growth of a business as it will develop existing skills and keep up to date with the rapid changes in technology and changes in society.

Andy Taylor owns and runs AiTraining Consultancy. He designs and develops training materials for organisations of all sizes. AiTraining Consultancy has a one day course on Training Needs Analysis and a self study Workbook on the same subject. For more details of either call +44 203 286 5165 or email andy@aitraining.net or visit the website www.aitraining.net.