

WHY ARE WE THE LAST TO BE TRAINED?



THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING TRAINERS



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Twenty years ago I was promoted to the position of Training Manager for a large pharmaceutical company. The selection process was a little complicated and to this day I believe that I was chosen because I made the Vice President of Sales laugh at a company social function and I was the number one sales representative in my region at the time. Nothing else qualified me to be a trainer.

Twenty-one years ago, the reasoning behind the selection process was: Good representatives (subject matter experts) make good trainers and/or good managers. That reasoning is still the foundation of the process of selecting trainers and managers today. The missing piece of the puzzle is training. Good sales representatives are usually trained to be good sales representatives. Companies won't leave that process to trial and error. Years of bad experiences have not always resulted in valuable lessons learned. We all know that a good subject matter expert does not always make a good trainer or a good manager. Yet, we repeat the failed process again and again. Companies have begun to train managers more frequently, however, trainers are usually still the last to be trained.

Twenty-one years ago I was a novice trainer, too green to know what I didn't know. I hopped into my new role, eager to tackle everything that was thrown my way. And true to company form, everything was thrown my way. We began a major expansion of the field force, we were rolling out the new technology (laptop computers) to all of the sales force, we had twice a month training classes for newly hired representatives, and my training colleagues and I were expected to teach these classes, develop them, design them, and implement them. Imagine that. And we didn't have PowerPoint slides, external consultants, or instructional designers. None of us had ever attended a national training conference; we knew nothing about instructional design, even less about adult learning principles, and even less about public speaking and facilitation. We had flip charts, a lot of colorful, washable markers, and a huge dose of courage and naivete. No one trained us to be trainers and boy oh boy did we make a lot of mistakes.

Fast forward to 2004 when I took over a training division for a major pharmaceutical company in Canada. My team of sixty trainers had the benefit of all of the technological advances that money could buy, from powerpoint slides, to web-ex, to instructional designers and external consultants, to interactive computer imagery, you name it—we had it, with one exception: those sixty trainers had never been trained to be trainers. And all of the mistakes that I made twenty years ago, they were making twenty years later. The only differences were: they had a lot more tools they could use and their mistakes were a lot costlier. Twenty years ago I made my mistakes on a flip chart. The trainers in 2004 made mistakes by hiring and instructing external consultants to the

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tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars. The most detrimental effect of this trial and error learning process is not on the training budget. The most severe negative impact is on the learner and ultimately on the business and performance results of the organization.

Trainers still need to know the basic skills of operating a training organization and companies still do not invest in training trainers. Senior executives need to be convinced that a little investment goes a long, long way.

And the skills that are lacking in even the most advanced training organizations are legion. Most trainers do not understand how to measure and evaluate training. Many understand very little about adult learning principles and instructional design. Some tenured trainers still don't deliver effective presentations, engage participants in learning, use visual aids well, and deal with difficult participants effectively.

Marketing training events, developing effective communications, and partnering with stakeholders are all skills that most trainers need, yet most never formally learn.

What were the trainers in my department doing if they were not learning to be trainers? Many were managing projects, managing vendors, responding to stakeholder requests, attending medical conventions, and lobbying for positions outside of the department. There had been very little emphasis put on learning the skills of training and people development. None were leader certified to deliver training courses and most had come into their positions because they were good representatives (subject matter experts).

Once we began to integrate skill development for trainers into the training curriculum, an amazing transition took place. Department members who had ho-hummed training in the past began to love their jobs. Our department provided better quality service to the stakeholders and our stakeholders began to perceive us as partners and consultants. We put an additional feather in our cap by winning a major training award. The level of respect from company executives increased ten-fold and our department members were starting to be viewed as training experts rather than request fillers (order takers).

Training professionals, who are considered experts, are more likely to be called upon to partner with key stakeholders and provide learning solutions proactively. In my experience, training trainers is a win/win best practice. The stakeholders and learners have a true partner that provides learning solutions and the training department's contribution is recognized and appreciated.

Training trainers is not just a good idea for the training organization; it's a good strategy for the business and a great asset to the learners.

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RIGHTHANDS RESOURCES SOLUTIONS

RightHands Resources will help you develop a training curriculum for your training team. Even small training teams will benefit from skill development. RightHands Resources will assess your team's developmental needs, find the best industry resources, and arrange training for your learning organization.

Some skill developmental areas to consider are:

- Facilitation and Presentation Skills
- Instructional Design
- Metrics and Measurements
- Partnering with Stakeholders
- Dealing with Difficult Participants
- Leader Training for Specific Courses
- Needs Assessment
- Effective Communications
- E Learning
- Blended Learning
- Creating a Corporate University
- Managing a Resource Center
- Prioritizing
- Managing Multiple Projects
- Leadership
- Creating Sustainability Tools
- And many others

WE KNOW THE INDUSTRY LIKE THE BACK OF OUR HAND

-  We Know the Industry
 - We are members of the national training organizations (ASTD, SPBT, Training Magazine Top 100, TrainingOutsourcing.com), and many specialized learning organizations.
-  We Know the Experts
 - From PhD's in Metrics and Measurements to e-Learning consultants, from motivational speakers to medical influence leaders, we know the industry experts and we can bring that expertise to your organization.
-  We Work For You
 - RightHands Resources is not affiliated with any industry resource providers. We are independent researchers; this ensures you an objective, unbiased analysis.

It is our mission to comb the industry on a daily basis and keep abreast of new developments, current trends and cutting edge learning resources.

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