

# Training Only Works if Reinforcement Methods are Built In

**Carolyn B. Thompson**

Most of us have noticed over the years that HR, training & development departments, and outside vendors provided wonderful one-shot trainings that participants would rank (at the end of the sessions) very high, but when the participants got back to work, they rarely used the skills or knowledge from the one-shot sessions. This lack of transfer of training seemed to be true even if the one-shot sessions included learning methods that involved real-world issues and lots of preaching about the importance of transferring information to experiences.

So we developed a list of all the reinforcement methods we could think of. Before designing any training, we work with the learners, their co-workers, and supervisors to choose just the ones they'll actually do. Then we design it into the training, so it doesn't feel like something extra. Part of the key to the approach are the words you use. We never say, "After the training, ..." Instead, we say, (for example): "On Friday you'll meet with your supervisor to tell him what, specifically, you did that week that related to the skills in the session on Monday."

Use the list below, excerpted from *Creating Highly Interactive Training Quickly & Effectively*, by Carolyn B. Thompson, pp. 19 & 20:

- Actively participate in determining training needs
- Actively participate in the design of the training
- Select Learners according to established criteria for that training and the need for that skill
- Participate in an advance briefing on the training
- Participate in some training with employees
- Arrange meetings between former Learners and those about to learn to discuss how to transfer learned skills to the job

- Make sure the Learner uses the new skills immediately

■ Have employee complete a Learning Action Plan before the training. Have employee continue to complete during and at the end of training. Collect and mail 1 copy of completed plan back 3 months after to training

- Conduct a pre-training meeting with all staff 2 days before the training to fill out Learning Action Plans and give the opportunity for employees to discuss objectives

■ Take a pre-training survey to determine current skills/knowledge

- Show your excitement about the Learner learning—what they'll be able to do when they finish training

■ Schedule the Learner's workload so they can focus on learning instead of worrying about what's not getting done

- Plan the evaluation method for use after training (observer checklist, post test, etc.)

■ Publish a training newsletter (ex. "Plotting our Progress")

- Hold reminder/booster sessions (at regularly scheduled meetings)

■ Use a Supervisory Follow up Booklet or Learner Reinforcement Booklet (decide which you need), which lists all skills learned, behaviors that should be seen, and what can be done to reinforce the learning

- Give constructive and immediate verbal feedback on performance

■ Plan and communicate rewards and incentives (on-the-spot and/or before the training)

- Create a screensaver w/ appropriate info

■ Conduct a meeting with the Learner back on the job to plan use the skills/meet the objectives they wrote on their Learning Action Plan

- Have the Learners write postcards to themselves re: skills they'll use and mail/give to them 2 weeks after completing the training

■ Provide Learners with a job aid for use on the job

- Have the Learner share training experience

## Develop A Marketing Plan to Recruit Employees

**REMEMBER:** Seek applicants all the time, not just when you have an opening!

Your company can grow and prosper with the right employees without spending a ton on recruiting costs. To do this, you'll need a Recruitment Plan – just like a marketing plan – but this is marketing to potential employees! The first step in developing and using a Recruitment Plan is to target your market (applicants). Ask and record the answers (involve as many of your current employees as possible to get the best results) to the following questions:

■ What are our company/departments objectives for the year? This is your mission statement or a paraphrase of it.

■ What makes us attractive to potential employees? Ask your employees the following questions to stimulate the discussion: "Why would someone want to work here?" "Why did you come to work here?" "Why do you stay?"

■ Who are our potential employees? Based on all you now know about the employees you need – are they new to the workforce, retired, students, veterans, people with disabilities, teachers, salespeople, accountants? Think about what walks

and learning with co-workers on the job

- Involve the Learner in work-related decisions based on new learning
- Request reports from the Learner on the

use of new skills and knowledge on the job

- Create thank you card for employees to write and put in central box about someone they saw doing one of the skills learned.

ers (inside and outside the organization)

- Have each of the people they'll be working with spend time with them (in department and outside) giving them info about their skills, knowledge, fun things to know about them

■ Provide them with a tour of all facilities

- Include them in all organization activities early
- Provide training in their basic job duties and responsibilities (best done by co-workers and supervisor)

■ Review all important policies and practices (especially those that aren't written)

- Provide an overview of benefits and services (get them to ask questions)
- Discuss their career and life needs/goals and what inspires them to do a great job and how the organization can meet them

■ Discuss your expectations and those of the organization

- Discuss your expectations and those of the organization

Carolyn B. Thompson is President of Training Systems, Inc. a customized performance improvement and HR consulting company that helps small and medium sized organizations enhance their ability to recruit, inspire and retain quality employees and improve performance through training. To subscribe the company's free e-zine on "Recruiting, Inspiring, retaining the Best!" send your e-mail address to [join-rrr@trainingsys.com](mailto:join-rrr@trainingsys.com)

ee knows the manager's expectations, the departmental goals, the organization's goals, and what important contributions the employee can make to the product, services, and the customer.

- Understanding the employee's expectations. It's equally important for the manager to find out what expectations the new employee has in the areas of training, promotion and preferred management and communication styles.

■ Explaining the employee's "shared responsibility". Begin by communicating to the new employee that they have to take a proactive role in "helping" their manager understand what it is that motivates and frustrates them.

- Reinforce their decision. Reinforce the sale, answer their questions, eliminate their fears, and give them something to tell their friends.

– excerpted from an article on the electronic recruiting exchange, by Dr. John Sullivan with permission of Carolyn B. Thompson, Training Systems.

**What to Do in a Great Orientation Program:**

- Prepare for their arrival (tell other staff, clean their work-space, order supplies, give them a typed first day schedule)
- Give them an introduction to your organization
- Introduce them to co-workers in their department and other

## Upgrade Your New Employee Orientation for Faster "Start Time" to "Productive Employee Time"

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The first week on the job plays a crucial role in inspiring, motivating and retaining new employees. We often spend lots of time and money recruiting and wooing new employees, and as soon as they start, we turn around and treat them like barely welcome strangers. We need to begin looking at recruiting as only half of the task of hiring. Orientation is the other, often ignored, element.

### Goals of Great Orientation Programs

Most orientation programs entail little more than putting a tape in the VCR. But if you really want to do a great "get on board" process, you need to first understand orientation's goals and potential impacts. Some of them include:

■ Time to productivity. Any delay in providing new hires with the guidance, equipment and training they need can slow the time it takes for a new employee to reach their minimum expected level of productivity.

■ Your image as "the best place to work". How you treat the person during this crucial period has a direct impact on what they say when colleagues ask what it's like to work there (future recruiting).

■ Setting manager's expectations. On the first day, it's important for the manager to make sure that the new employ-

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