



Too Busy To Train? Think Again

By Linda Hanson



How many times have you wished your managers and field crews were as good as you? Maybe some of them are struggling to do things the way you want them done and are failing. Others may take longer to master new tasks and therefore you find it takes them too long to complete a job.

There is no doubt that workers in many industries today are pushed to produce more in less time and that may be why research shows that today's workers are less satisfied with their jobs versus a decade ago. In addition, as large numbers of baby boomers prepare to leave the work force, they will be increasingly replaced by younger workers, who tend to be more dissatisfied with their jobs than older workers. They also have different attitudes and expectations about the role of work in their lives. This transition presents a new challenge for many employers and may be impacting your ability to get managers and field crews to reach their full potential.

The answer to the problem for many agencies and companies is to provide more training and coaching of their employees. If your field personnel get below eight hours of training per year it won't lead to any changes in their production. Many organizations offer more training for their management and while that is good, construction companies make or lose most of their money out on the jobsite, not in the office. Quality, service and productivity happens, to a great extent, out in the field.

Most public agencies don't have formal training programs and making time to train employees is challenging because as a manager there are time constraints on you. But leaving people to learn by doing or by the trial and error method is costly. Set a goal to conduct training that will help your employees excel. **Your training goal should be to provide 40 hours of training per year, per employee.** The total cost probably won't be more than two percent of your payroll cost but your return will be much higher improvement in bottom-line productivity.

To get started, call a meeting with your managers or team to select and prioritize training topics. In future years make it a habit to cover the same topics plus add new ones—there are always new people and refresher classes reinforce correct performance. Allocate training time each week such as 30 minutes every Tuesday morning. Remember, training can be held in the office or on the jobsite but it should be interactive. Use the old method of telling them what you are going to tell them, tell them, show them, let them do it and tell them again. Follow up by coaching participants until they get it right then recognize those who do a good job. Share training duties among your crew, based on experience and skill, so everyone gets a chance to teach.

There are times when you should use outside people to instruct on new or technical tasks. Bringing in a specialist to train or sending employees offsite to interactive seminars and workshops can be worth the investment providing you coach them after they get back on the job so they are implementing their new skills.

People want to make a meaningful contribution on the job and they want to be recognized for their efforts. Training does this and it also fosters team spirit and more enthusiasm for their work. Use training and coaching to build productivity, quality of work, motivation, and company loyalty.

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