

## How to get the most out of your training

To make investing in training worthwhile, managers must take action to ensure that lessons learned are carried through into working practices, says Marc Hogan.

There is no doubt that staff training events can be beneficial to your organisation and can open your staff up to fresh ways of thinking. However, it is often the case that as soon as staff leave the training room, 'chair amnesia' sets in and all that was learnt is forgotten. As a manager there are a number of things you can do to ensure that the good work done in the training room is carried through into working practices.



### Active involvement

The first step towards making training stick is to encourage active involvement during the event. A good training session should include activities where employees create behavioural goals that can be applied specifically to their own working practices.

A buddy or manager should then be assigned to follow up and support them periodically. This will help create a feeling of commitment and prevent employees from leaving the training with a sense of general inspiration, but no idea how to use it in practice; ultimately the more that staff understand how to practically implement what they've learned, the more effective the training will be.

### Exemplary behaviour

Staff will usually adapt more readily to new working practices if they see them being followed by those in authority. Managers often avoid attending behavioural training events, but in order to set a good example it is vital to attend on the day. Once the training is over, managers must act as a beacon of excellence, exemplifying how the training can be successfully applied. If a manager isn't using their new skills, or is asking employees to break with newly learned behaviours, faith in the training will dwindle and behaviours will revert.

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## Refreshers and incentives

Refreshers are also important to keep commitment and motivation levels high. Simple measures to keep your team on track might include distributing a 'Top Tips' document to remind staff of what was learned. Again, though, active involvement is the key to making training work, so regular refresher meetings should be held to review how each individual is applying their training in a practical sense. Success stories can be very motivating, so examples of best practice should be summarised and distributed by email to keep motivation high.

Another way to incentivise the application of training is to reward 'soft skills' such as attitudes and behaviours as part of employees' annual bonus reviews. At the same time, hard targets such as sales figures should be re-examined to see if there are in fact inhibiting good behaviour. For example, giving too short a time frame to complete a project might seem like a way of motivating staff to work harder, but it may well be discouraging good cooperative behaviours

## Adapting working practices

If you find that desirable employee behaviours are at odds with current business practices, then it may be time to reconsider your business model. Again, a good trainer should be able to advise on how working practices might be tweaked to make the behaviours easier to follow. This might involve simple measures such as changing the way team meetings are organised, or it might involve a more dramatic change in the structure of your business. Whatever changes you decide to make, the key to making training a long-term success is to ensure that behaviours are actively evaluated in the training room and consistently applied on the office floor.

*Marc Hogan is communications skills expert and business coach. For more information visit [www.marchoganlive.com](http://www.marchoganlive.com)*

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