



# ARE YOU GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR TRAINING DOLLAR?



by Dean Gagne

**A**s a former management educator and trainer, I often wondered how effective companies were using their training dollars. It is not uncommon for companies to conduct training sessions in which participants show up late, leave early, leave the session to make calls, or even sleep during the session — so I'm told! And, in the end, the participants evaluate the trainer as to how well he or she entertained them. This seems ludicrous when one considers the importance people play in making or breaking companies.

**I**t is not equipment or facilities or technology that will give your company its edge over the competition, it is the people who implement the equipment, facilities, and technology. They are the people who think (we hope), decide, and act each and every day your company is operating. If they do the wrong job — or even the right job in the wrong way — your company will lose. After all, organisations are not legal entities but a collection of individuals who gather to, hopefully, work toward some commonly shared objective.

**S**o why do so many companies end up wasting money developing their people? It's not because their people are not worth investing in for competitive advantage. No! No! It's because most companies are holding the wrong person accountable for the training of their people. The trainer — yes, the trainer — should not bear the sole responsibility for the desired behaviour change of employees who attend training programs!

**S**top and think about this for a moment...What do we expect when the training is completed and the individuals go back to work? That they will behave the same way as before we sent them for training? No! We want them to behave differently — that is the reason we send them for training.

**I** think we want our people to be better as a result of the training and, at the same time, get the most out of our training dollar. Here's how some successful Hong Kong companies do it:

**F**irst, the Managing Directors of these companies get directly involved and hold themselves personally accountable for the success of the training programs. In the best cases, they even participate in the training themselves. They do this mainly because they want to make sure the training is going to help move their company toward its vision, and they also realize that people are key to the success of their business. And, as leaders, they realize the need to lead the

troops into battle and show them that this is the way the company is moving.

**S**econd, they hold managers of the participants accountable.

Managers simply cannot delegate away the responsibility of changing the behaviour of their employees. At some point they, as managers, will be accountable for the performance of their departments and results produced by their people. They cannot hide behind excuses forever! So, they may delegate the task of changing the behaviour of people, but they cannot delegate the responsibility.

**T**hird, and most important, they hold the participants themselves accountable for results. And it works! For example, some of the worst trainers in the world — academics — produce some of the best results. They can achieve these results because it is the responsibility of students to meet the standard, not the trainer. Can you imagine students going to the Dean of the college and demanding they be passed because of a bad teacher? It happens! But the university does not change the standard because students were unhappy and not entertained enough. The university simply replies: "We're sorry, but you just did not meet our standard." End of story. And you know something, students know this, they adjust, and rise up to meet the expectation.

**F**inally, these companies hold the trainers accountable. It's the responsibility of the trainer to produce material and programs that will help build individuals up, and these programs must help companies move closer to their visions — or the training is useless. It is not the trainer's responsibility to entertain, but it is his/her responsibility to educate and develop skills. Trainers can do this by relating their exercises and assignments to a company's vision.

In closing, as one Managing Director commented, "Education is sometimes painful, but always necessary!" So, the moral of the story is this: If you want to get the most out of your training dollar, you need to apply the right amount of accountability to the right players. ♦

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