Why We Need a New Training Model for Talent Retention
By Ann N. Gatty, Ph.D.

Most of us have sat through training sessions that included slides, lectures and pages of handouts. We may have experienced retreats, online course instruction, and/or personal coaching. However, such educative efforts, always offered in the hopes of improving employee performance, mostly fell short of desired results. Such efforts, although noble in intent, were not devised with a comprehensive understanding of how individuals learn. No offense to those who planned the training, but as an individual with years of research and training in the field of instruction and learning, I offer some suggestions to boost the success rate for corporate learning efforts.

We are experiencing a time in the workplace where retaining top talent is a paramount concern. A company's biggest problem in 2017 is not predicted to be weak sales, soft pricing, or even too much regulation. No, their biggest problem is predicted to be the lack of qualified labor. If you are a business leader, statistics are not in your favor. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 18-35-year-olds had an average tenure of 1.6 years per job in January 2016.

By 2020 millennials and gen-Z will make up 50% of the workforce. In other words, soon most members of the workforce expect to work with a single company for less than two years. They will be walking out the door. Unless you do something, and do something now.

This is not the time to skimp on development and retention efforts – or you may find yourself in a downward cycle of vacancies that recruiting efforts can't solve. We need to embrace a new employee development model to retain top talent. What would this look like?

We know that there is an explosion of online course instruction, and learning a new skill set can be just a click away. In addition, there are plenty of educational training organizations willing to arrive at your company's doorstep and present "customized" training with polished handouts for your employees. These can be fine, if—and this is where the rubber meets the road—if, there is true "learning" going on. Often training programs simply provide individuals with more information that is never applied.

You see, I believe there is a distinction between learning to know vs. learning to do. Much of what is offered through training modules in the corporate world, helps employees acquire more knowledge. But, can they put that knowledge to use? And secondly, is it directly applicable to improving the skill set specific to their job? Often not. Here's the point; companies would be better served by creating an employee learning and development model that was specific to the needs of the individual employees' skill improvement. It also should allow for individual career development, and provide all employees an understanding that such learning efforts contribute to the overall mission of the organization. A tall order, no doubt, but doable. Here's how.

Although I am not going to bother you with a litany of details about instructional methodology—that would probably only interest me—I can say that there is a specific approach I would suggest when revising an employee learning and development program:

Steps to Create an Employee Learning and Development Program

ANALYZE YOUR NEEDS

Starting with the vision of the organization and its current target goals for the coming year, identify the activities that are needed to get you there. Prioritize these most urgent needs so the organization can reach its intended goals.

IDENTIFY THE GAPS

Consider how the work in the organization gets completed. Review the current range of human talent and technologies that can be used, in combination, to best complete the work. Check our Grow a High-Performance Workforce & Produce Exploding Profits workbook. You'll see the gaps.

PLAN THE L& D PROGRAM

Provide training in critical human skills for the future workforce: communication skills, innovation, problem solving, listening, and ethical decision making. These are examples of human skills that every organizational culture needs in order to develop a positive highly productive workforce. The more successful learning and development programs blend skill building efforts for collaboration, leadership development, and cross-functional innovation.

CHOOSE A BLEND OF TEACHING COMPONENTS

Optimal employee development experiences blend both in-person and online training. Not only do such instruction options allow for more flexibility in scheduling, the company may find it more economical to include online instruction. Common in-person examples include traditional classroom instruction, individual and group coaching, and online courses. However, to deepen the level of understanding and soft-skill development, the following instructional methods offer an invaluable expansion of employee development and leadership transformation:

- Peer led debate to consider alternative solutions.
- Mentoring a lesser ranking peer to develop emerging leaders
- Hands-on and job shadowing opportunities to experience real-life situations

It's easy to see that online instruction has become much more affordable and available. The topic range expands daily. The presentation has increased in quality with personalized interaction between instructor and student more readily available. Mobile training apps also amplify learning and allow for additional instruction with many programs.

DELIVER THE PROGRAM

One mistake organizations often make when offering leadership and career development programs is that the training is sporadic, the quality level is inconsistent, and the follow-up is almost non-existent. Any L & D

program that is to be effective must be delivered in a systematic manner, including time and place. Program goals and a means of measuring success also must be delineated. It takes structured progression to transform and grow employees.

I encourage employee training programs to accommodate learning at the employee's own pace. Individuals rely on different styles of learning to digest and apply new concepts and skill sets. If your company goals include increased talent retention, then blending individual career goals and corporate goals will need to be one of the core components in any new training model.

Download our Grow a High-Performance Workforce & Produce Exploding Profits workbook to start the process of creating a talent retention initiative.

About the Author

Dr. Ann Gatty is a business success expert. She helps her clients clarify the vision for their businesses, boost their leadership capabilities and add quality talent to help the clients reach their goals. Through a collaborative mentoring process, she and her clients create workable strategic business plans and success initiatives, while improving their workplace processes. She is frequently featured in the media and contributes blog posts for www.AllBusiness.com and www.WomenOnBusiness.com. Her interactive speaking engagements assist participants in discovering new-found talents and skills that they can immediately apply in the workplace. Join her Facebook Group, Strategic Thinking Summit Elites for strategies you can implement to grow your business success and enjoy camaraderie with others entrepreneur members.