Not Your Typical Personal Training: Turning Your Employees into Company Talent

How can you leverage your training hours to make sure you're getting the biggest return? Well, it's your lucky day - we've got a few answers for you!

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In recent years, training has become an increasingly pivotal topic, not just in the HR space but across departments. Many companies have begun to realize that investing in training upfront results in huge returns in productivity and engagement - and ultimately, in the growth of your business. Plus, it's what employees are beginning to look for in a job - 74% of employees feel that they aren't achieving their full potential at work, and they *want* more training to help close that gap. But all training is not created equal. If you're sitting down to put together a training plan for your team, you may be thinking, *how do I make sure this training is worth it?* How can you leverage your training hours to make sure you're getting the biggest return? Well, it's your lucky day - we've got a few answers for you!

Before Your Training Session

The key first step is to create a logical curriculum flow. You have to know what you want to teach your employees - and in what order! Build out your content calendar for training, either by month or by quarter depending on your specific team situation - and let your team know what's coming! Set expectations for what the team's focus will be during that period's training. Of course, you'll need to measure your progress and success. How do you measure success? Well, it starts with defining clear goals and outcomes not only for your trainees but also for yourself as the trainer. And then follow up at the end of the month and the quarter! (But we'll get to that part in a bit.) So you might be wondering... how do I build the calendar and plan this training? The obvious focus of training falls on new hires - especially considering that the cost of losing an employee within the first year could be up to three times' the employee's salary. Ideally, one subset of your training content calendar should be focused specifically on the needs of new hires, from 90 days post-hire training to quarterly reviews. Think about it - what's your end goal here? To get the best ROI from your new hire, you want to have someone who is self-sufficient and requires limited resources from management to complete their day-to-day work. In order to plan this successfully, evaluate what is needed for a new hire to be productive for your company. This becomes the basis for your new hire training. Additional "bonus" topics can be added into subsequent pieces of training. In our Viventium training system, we break it up into Levels I, II, and III, so as not to overwhelm our new hires. Of course, training doesn't just stop once a new hire passes 90 days - training should be ongoing throughout your employees' careers with your company. (And guess what - 68% of employees don't want the training to stop, regardless of their seniority!) One tactic we've found extremely useful here at Viventium is to have team training with all employees of like position, but have supplemental pieces of training for various groups. What does that mean? Well, for our sales team, we do an entry-level brush-up course for reps who are struggling - but we are also looking into implementing a monthly roundtable to challenge our senior reps on new topics, products, and knowledge. Training should also be "looped," or repeated into the content calendar, for reinforcement - especially if you have a complex topic that requires a pre-requisite building block that you don't think employees have mastered, or if you simply need to tighten up an employee's skill set.

During Your Training Session

We've all heard this before, but it's the truth - everyone learns differently. Your team is likely made up of a mix of auditory, visual, kinesthetic, and reading/writing learners - and as a trainer, you need to be flexible to accommodate them. A whopping 62% of employees believe that their training programs are not doing a good job meeting their learning needs - let's break that statistic! How will you know how your team learns best? Valid question. The best way is, simply, to get to know everyone on your team on an individual level. Team meetings are both necessary and beneficial, but regular one-on-one conversations with your team members will help you identify the different learners in your

training sessions and understand how you can best help them learn. Getting to know the individuals on your team will also help your ability to read the room during your training. Do you know how a performer can feel the crowd and get the vibe? It's kind of the same thing with training. Watch the body language of your audience to see who is engaged, who seems uncertain, and who may need to be drawn back into the conversation. So when you're conducting your training, play to the strengths of your different learners to keep everyone engaged. Keep it interactive - ask questions, draw on a whiteboard or smartboard, and move around the room while you talk to your team. Need some ideas for switching up your teaching methods?

- PowerPoint
- Practical application or roleplay
- Scenario-based learning
- Handouts
- Discussions
- Self-study

The idea here is to keep your audience engaged by switching things up. The brain is just like any other muscle - if you exercise the same way every day, your muscles will become used to the motion and won't continue to develop. When training your body, you need to practice muscle confusion and change up your daily workouts. The same applies to training your employees' minds! That way, employees will come to training ready to be an active learner, rather than sitting passively and expecting you to just talk at them. And of course, you can never forget about on-the-job training - where you, as the trainer, are your employees' co-pilot. After learning the training, in theory, employees need to practice it in action, with your help to coach them along and get them comfortable with implementing the training real-time.

After Your Training Session

We talked about measuring success in terms of being able to define goals and outcomes for your team. One great way to test those outcomes is to assess how much your employees have retained the knowledge from your training sessions. Here, we turn to technology! Our sales team, as an example, uses Qstream, a sales acceleration software platform that tests retention of knowledge. Technology is also a great way to get feedback from employees on your training methods, which will help your efforts to continuously improve your training content and content calendar. Softwares like SurveyMonkey and Qualtrics are easy-to-implement (and sometimes free!) tools that can help you gather that feedback. Just make sure you're actually using it to shape your future training plans! When it comes down to it, you want to encourage your employees to continue to grow and develop while avoiding stagnation and plateaus - and you need to let them know how invested you are in them! Positive reinforcement - recognizing and rewarding the desired behavior - is a great encouragement

practice. Practicing positive reinforcement in the workplace provides a sense of worth, encourages good behavior, and improves workplace morale. So reward your employees for the small wins, things you see in practical application in real scenarios, as well as for the major milestones as an individual and team.

The Bottom Line

This is business - while keeping employees happy is crucial, executives will want to know the concrete return on investment for training. But the numbers don't lie. Training boosts productivity - a study from the National Center on the Educational Quality of the Workforce found that a 10 percent increase in workforce education led to an 8.6 percent gain in total productivity. And it impacts your bottom line as well - according to HR Magazine, companies that invest $1,500 or more per employee per year on training average 24 percent higher profit margins. When you have done everything in your power to invest in your employee, and that employee soars, it's an amazing feeling. That's what we strive for, as trainers. But we can only take each employee so far - if they fail to apply the training, that's on them. We just have to make sure we give each employee the tools to succeed! Investing in training is no longer an option for competitive companies. And if you do it right, everyone will reap the benefits, from individual employees to the company itself. So let's start building!

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