

## Training in Turbulent Times THE BEST TIME TO BOLSTER YOUR BIGGEST ASSETS

**D**uring the last few years of sustained economic growth companies were often "too busy" to implement new training programs. Employees often worked significant overtime, taking up the time needed for training. And besides, sales and profits were up without the added training -- so who needs it?

Now that we're facing a real and sustained economic downswing in some critically important markets, the tendency inevitably will be to cut back on all of the "non-critical" operations expenses (like training) until the market recovers. It seems the prevailing attitude is that, "It's just not a good time to train," no matter what the market is doing. That's just shortsighted and not in the interest of your company's long term growth or competitive advantage.

### If that sounds like your plan, we ask you to think again.

Busy times, rising sales and growing profits cover up a multitude of sins. That is not the case in leaner times. In many cases, an economic downturn is the most appropriate time to ratchet up your training for the following reasons:

- > If there is a cutback on hiring, or worse yet, layoffs, the remaining employees need to pick up more responsibilities. Training helps them deal with the extra work, stress and increased responsibilities. It may even help identify candidates for promotion down the line.
- > Time is now available for employees to take the needed training that the earlier hectic pace and significant overtime presented.
- > If there were ever a time to increase your employees' productivity and competitiveness, now is that time. Mistakes, omissions and business errors that were previously overcome by increased profits can now dry up your revenue stream.

So please reconsider what training can do for you in an economic downturn by asking yourself:

- 1 Do my counter people really have a better handle on the products we sell than our competitors' employees do?

Can my employees answer questions about differences between quarter-turn and multi-turn valves, or qualify customers by asking the "right" questions?

- 2 Do my inside sales reps understand the impact on profits in the company when they quote a price that's just 1% lower than it needs to be?
- 3 When everyone was as busy as they needed to be, did they really care about adding line items to a sale? (That #1 predictor of profitability becomes critically important in leaner times.)
- 4 Do my people understand what causes unprofitable sales—and do they know that there are several ways to increase the profitability of a given transaction?

Even if there was only a tiny speck of doubt when you said "yes" to these questions, we hope you'll read on. And if you said "no," well, you already know you need our help!

The good news is that ASA's Education Foundation offers a multitude of courses in product knowledge that will enable you to give better service and make fewer mistakes than the competition. It offers several courses in sales and the business of

to increase its spending on program development. We are investing in you, so that you can invest in your sales and operations teams. Aggressive associations like ASA recognize that it is precisely during these downturns that, by ramping up our activities and investments, our members can benefit most.

Here's a brief preview of what we're going to be developing, beginning in 2008, to serve you:

- > *Essentials of Profitable Showroom Sales*® Certificate Course
- > *Essentials of Profitable Warehouse Operations*® Certificate Course
- > FREE On-Line Training Course: "Fundamentals of Wholesale Distribution"
- > FREE On-Line "Ultimate Training Resource"
- > 24/7 Access to New Series of Mini-Webinars
- > "Basic Training" for New Hires
- > And much more

Remember that changing conditions open up opportunities for resourceful companies to outsmart larger competitors who, during a downturn, carry on business as usual or are unable to adapt quickly—except to fire employees. The challenge is to be aggressive and imaginative.

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wholesale distribution that will make your people better sales people and better business people. And, it offers important tools like the *Employee Performance Improvement Tool Kit*® that will help you plan your training and other HR activities to develop the highest levels of personnel productivity.

#### EDUCATION FOUNDATION INVESTS MORE IN YOU

With the help of the \$10 million Karl E. Neupert Endowment Fund, the ASA Education Foundation is planning

Let ASA help your company to:

- > Gain market share by taking it away from competitors unable to adjust to shifting market conditions.
- > Maintain a strong cash stream throughout the downturn.
- > Become a leaner, more cost-effective, and more efficient operation, better positioned to do well when the market improves.

Visit us at [www.asa.net](http://www.asa.net) or call 312.464.0090. We look forward to hearing from you!