

ROI of Training (Part II of III)

Do Your Part to Make Sure it Succeeds



If a training program's success is to be measured by how it affects the company's bottom line, it stands to reason that the implementation of that program ought to be carefully planned to maximize its potential.

In last month's issue, Part I of this three-part series examined the ways in which a company could view the potential ROI of training its employees. But while hard and fast numbers can be difficult to substantiate, there is more than enough real-world evidence among the most successful firms to make the case (refer to Part I, April 2008 *Supply House Times*)

For Part II, we're offering some tips on how a plumbing or industrial PVF wholesaler can implement a program that will optimize the success of its training investment.

STEP 1 – Ask for Help Getting Started

- > **Assign a Training Coordinator to work with ASA**
 - It's best to assign a specific person who will place orders, receive results of courses, distribute certificates and resolve any issues that arise.
 - If you use several on-line courses, ASA can provide company specific log-ins and a trainer's access to allow your company to monitor students' progress on-line and download course results into your own database.
- > **Review the ASA catalog**
 - Start with the basic ASA recommendations in Step 3 and refine them to fit your company and the different jobs and job levels. The entire catalog of ASA offerings, program descriptions, sample pages and on-line ordering are available at www.asa.net.
- > **Order the materials from ASA**
 - Use downloadable order forms in the job description areas of the website, or order directly on-line.

STEP 2 – Leverage ASA Training with Other Resources

- > **Utilize other HR procedures to help make training successful**
 - Job descriptions
 - New employee orientation
 - Performance review procedures
 - Training in other aspects of job, company and business
 - Recruitment and retention procedures
 - Consider using ASA's *Employee Performance Improvement Tool Kit*©

- > **Build in other, non-ASA training as necessary**
 - History and purpose of your company
 - Special, job-related procedures, i.e., closing out counter cash operations
 - Review job descriptions for special needs, i.e., fork lift safety and certification for warehouse personnel
 - Use ASA's online *Ultimate Training Resource*© to identify a variety of other training resources

STEP 3 – Select the Right Courses for the Job/Position

- > **Within 90 days of hiring, for all new employees who already possess basic math and English skills, ASA recommends the following courses:**
 - *Introduction to Pipe, Valves & Fittings*©
 - *Customer Service: The Path to Higher Profits*©
 - *Essentials of Profitable Distribution*©
- > **For employees who will work the counter, inside sales, and/or outside sales:**
 - *Introduction to Pipe, Valves & Fittings*©
 - *Introduction to Steel, Stainless Steel, Iron Pipe & Fittings*©
 - *Introduction to Copper Tube, Plastic Pipe & Fittings*©
 - *Product Pro*® Specialty Series, by topic, where indicated:
 - *Domestic Water Heaters*©
 - *Residential Hydronic Heating Systems*©
 - *Domestic Water Well Pumps*©
 - *Sump, Sewage & Effluent Pumps*©
 - *Residential Water Processing*©
 - *Essentials of Profitable Inside Sales in Distribution*© for inside sales and others on the track for outside sales
- > **For employees who will work in the showroom:**
 - *Introduction to Pipe, Valves & Fittings*©
 - *Essentials of Fixtures & Faucets*©
 - *Essentials of Profitable Showroom Sales*©
- > **For all managers and supervisors:**
 - Provide a desk reference copy of *The Art of Supervising & Motivating People*© to be used when addressing areas of HR such as interviewing, hiring, disciplining, etc.

STEP 4 – Blend Several Delivery Methods

- > **The following generally apply to both book-based and computer-based training:**
 - Combine several methods such as self-study, discussion, short classroom, review/exam sessions.
 - Assign a mentor to act as a consultant or coach to ensure trainees make consistent progress; a supervisor or other experienced employees are good examples.
 - ASA courses are designed with short segments, quizzes, etc. If there is an exam, remove it and save it for the end of the course.

- Build in real examples from your warehouse, financial statements, histories, and policies.
- Integrate your company's sales reports into sales training.
- Use financial statements when training on profitability.
- Collect product samples and schematics to complement *ProductPro*® training.
- When available, use the ASA resources like the summary seminars, leader's guides, etc.

STEP 5 – Make it Part of Your Corporate Culture

- > **Establish timetables for completing the training program(s)**
 - ASAEF has a list of estimated hours for completion that should be spread out over anywhere from a few weeks to several weeks. The timing strategy should be designed to keep the student on track without being burdensome. Learning a little bit over time provides much better retention than crash learning.
- > **Provide incentives for students to complete the programs**
 - One of the most powerful incentives can be using completion of training as part of an employee development program. For example, make completion of the *Essentials of Inside Sales in Distribution*© course a prerequisite for moving from a counter sales position to an inside sales position.
 - You may wish to tie in a modest hourly wage increase for a student who completes the first three modules of *ProductPro*® within the given time frame. Other incentives, such as a gift certificate or dinner at a local restaurant, might be an added incentive.
- > **Celebrate learning by making completion of training a "big deal"**
 - Make a big deal at company meetings, in your newsletters, on bulletin boards, etc., about the employees in your company who have completed their training programs.
 - Frame their certificates and hang them prominently for your customers and other employees to see. Ask these employees often about how the specific training they've received has helped them perform their jobs better, and what they would like to learn about in the future.

If you want to discuss additional ideas, thoughts and strategies for your training, contact Paul Martin at 312-464-0090, ext. 202, or email pfmartin@asa.net.

Next month, Part III: success stories from companies who have used these techniques to achieve superior performance.