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What Happens If You Don't Train Them?

by Tricia Jack, M.P.A., CPPA

With slimmer budgets now a fact of life, often one of the first lines to be cut from organizational budgets is training and development. It's an easy thing to cut, and when times are tough and organizational life is really about survival, training is often considered to be "non-essential" to success. But is that really the case?

Admittedly, training and development can be expensive. It involves not just direct costs such as class registration fees, but also many indirect costs like travel, per diem rates, materials, and time away from work. These are real financial costs and the impact on budgets is significant. No argument there.

The costs of not training people are real: for example, mistakes, lower quality product, procedures or rules not followed, loss of productivity and loss of morale, to name but a few. Think of the last person who served you in a government agency. If you had someone who had apparently not been trained well and who didn't appear to know what they were doing, it didn't exactly give you confidence in the agency, did it?

In addition, training sometimes doesn't have immediate results. Despite popular belief, people are not sprinkled with "fairy dust" at a training class. They mostly don't come back with new skills and knowledge, ready to go. There is a period of transfer back to the job, which may take hours, days or weeks. Neither is training a "catch all" for things that are wrong in departments or organizations; perhaps the problems are due to jobs being structured incorrectly, inexperienced managers or just simply poor communication.

Some of the reasons people use for not training employees are, "it is too expensive," "the return on investment is hard to measure," and "it is too slow." But consider this: what is the cost of *not* training them?

When employees are trained properly, training becomes an investment. The benefits, although perhaps "soft" and "indirect" are also real:

- Customers are more satisfied when they are served by staff who are happy and where morale is good.
- Training is not just training. Most people experience a level of morale boosting from training, just by knowing the organization is willing to make an investment in them.
- Loyalty to the organization is increased.
- When pay raises cannot be made, the offer of training and development is often a good motivator.

Yes, public sector agencies are in a time of hardship. Most have had their budgets cut, and many have chosen to implement a training and development budget cut. Yet, it is attention to detail and customer service that makes public sector agencies shine. How can this happen when employees are undertrained, overstressed and low in morale?

When you are considering whether to cut training and development, just ask yourself: "what happens if we *don't* train them?" The answers may lead you to realize just how valuable training really is.

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