



How to Implement a Successful Employee Training Program

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I. Executive Summary

Many organizations fail when it comes to successfully implementing their employee training programs. This can happen for a number of reasons, which include (but aren't limited to) not enough planning before implementation, providing the wrong content, offering training that's too time-consuming, and having no way of measuring if it's successful or not.

However, there IS a proven way to ensure a successful and effective employee training program for any organization. If you or your organization are looking to implement an employee training program that not only increases the skills and knowledge of your workforce, but also increases employee engagement, resulting in increased productivity, employee retention and profits, then you've come to the right place. Implementing the proper employee training program for your team may take some effort, but having a robust, engaging program in place will provide benefits to your organization for years to come.

- ✓ Increase employee skills and knowledge
- ✓ Increase employee engagement
- ✓ Increase employee productivity
- ✓ Increase employee retention and profits

II. Introduction

Most organizations today offer training programs to their employees in order to increase their skills and help them advance in their careers. Yet many organizations find that it doesn't make the impact they hoped it would. Either employees don't connect with the material or they fail to apply it to their daily job duties, and organizations see no real impact on productivity or employee engagement. Failing employee training means [falling engagement](#), which can ultimately harm an organization.

According to Gallup,



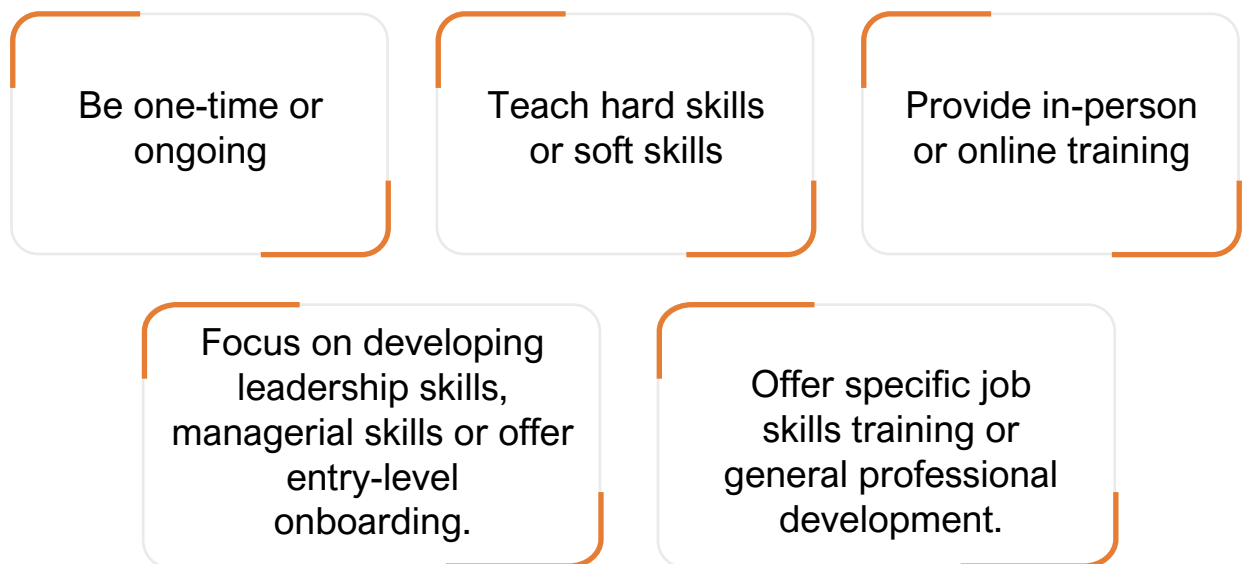
However, by being more thoughtful with their planning, engagement and measurement around implementing an employee training program, organizations can avoid or solve these common issues, and create a highly-engaged and productive workplace that can increase morale, retention, profits and more.

In this white paper, we examine what an employee training program actually is, the benefits of employee training, common reasons why training isn't successful and three crucial steps to implementing a successful employee training program.

III. What Is Employee Training?

An employee training program is simply a way to offer education to employees to develop their job-related skills, but the way in which organizations do this can vary.

Employee training can:



Whatever form employee training takes, there's always one main goal: To give employees the knowledge, resources and tools to help them do their job more efficiently and effectively.

IV. The Benefits of a Successful Employee Training Program

Organizations want to maintain a happy and productive workforce, but many organizations struggle with knowing how. They may be missing out on the benefits of an employee training program, which are vast and well-documented. The following are just a few of the benefits of implementing an employee training program.

Increased Engagement

One of the biggest benefits of employee training is a more engaged workforce. According to [Gallup](#), 51% of employees don't feel engaged at work, and don't feel like they're doing something meaningful, contributing to their organization's goals or growing in their career. Additionally, disengaged employees cost businesses in the U.S. upwards of [\\$550 billion](#) in lost productivity annually.

Employee training can increase engagement in a number of ways. By providing courses that can increase knowledge in both soft and hard skills, employees will feel more confident

51%
of employees don't feel engaged at work

54%
of the workforce will require new skills in the next five years

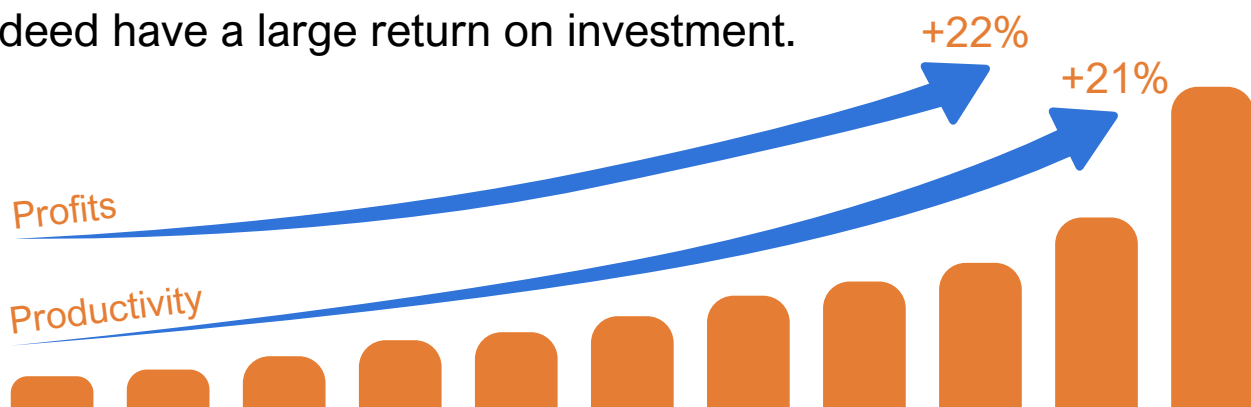
in their current job duties, and assured they have the tools to be successful at work. Skills training can also help employees feel more optimistic when they take on new job duties, especially during workplace changes like a shift to remote work.

Employees also feel engaged at a workplace willing to provide opportunities for learning new skills, as [54% of the workforce](#) will require new skills in the next five years. Additionally, [87% of millennials](#) are looking for a workplace that can offer professional development.



Increased Productivity

A highly-skilled, engaged workforce can also increase productivity, which can increase profits. According to [Gallup](#), engaged teams can increase productivity by 21%, and profits by 22%. This means that efforts and budget dedicated to employee training can indeed have a large return on investment.



Increased Retention

Another benefit of offering a training program is that it provides employees an opportunity for professional development and a way to advance their careers. According to a [Gallup survey](#), up to 87% of millennials consider development in a job important, meaning that employee training is directly linked to retention and longevity.

Highly-engaged employees who have the opportunity to develop with the organization will also stay with the organization, increasing employee retention. Not only is high turnover a blow to morale, it's also expensive. According to the [Center for American Progress](#), replacing an employee can cost upwards of 21.4% of that employee's annual salary. According to a [2018 survey](#), 87% of leaders call improving employee retention a critical or high priority.

Improved Recruiting

Employee training can also help with recruiting and onboarding. [Research by Glassdoor](#) found that organizations with a strong onboarding process improve new hire retention by 82% and productivity by over 70%. Additionally, a [report from PWC](#) shows that 52% of millennials are attracted to organizations that offer opportunities for career development and advancement, and 35% are looking for training and development programs.

Quick and Easy Information Distribution

Finally, employee training gives organizations an easy way to get all employees trained on company-wide initiatives like diversity or sexual harassment training, as well as ensuring compliance.

V. Why Some Employee Training Programs Don't Deliver Results

Here's the thing: even if an organization adopts an employee training program, it's not guaranteed to succeed. The following are a few reasons why a program might not be hitting its goals or may seem ineffective.

No Clear Goals:

Many organizations start by purchasing or implementing a training program without thinking through exactly how they want it to work. Organizations need to think through the objectives for their employee training program first, like the specific content they want to train on, what they would consider successful training and how to measure that success.

Employees Aren't Engaged:

Training only works if employees are engaged with the material, which increases retention rate and ensures that employees can apply what they've learned. But training that doesn't engage employees will be the least effective, which is one major disadvantage of non-interactive, classroom-led, lecture-based training.

It's the Wrong Content for the Wrong Audience:

Training content might be assigned to an entire organization, yet apply only to a few. For example, leaders might be assigned content that's entry level, and vice versa; or content might not contain relevant examples to the workplace.

In a survey done by Degreed and Harvard Business Publishing Corporate Learning, [61% of workers](#) believed that training would be more engaging if it was aligned to their skills gaps.

- ✓ **it takes too much time:** With so much to do at work already, [employee training is commonly considered an obstacle](#) to professional development, which is why a common concern regarding employee training has to do with timing. How long should training be? Should employees be required to take it outside of work? If they train during work hours, does it affect their productivity? These are important questions that often aren't asked beforehand.
- ✓ **upper management isn't involved:** Employee training usually doesn't work if it's not being led from the top. If senior leadership only provides employee training to check a box on compliance, or has no plan for its usage, then employees will receive the message that it's not important.
- ✓ **no one tracks results or asks for feedback:** Many organizations that believe their employee training isn't working actually don't have ways to measure this claim. They don't keep track of engagement, they don't follow up to see if employees are putting their new skills to work, and they don't ask for feedback to see if it's helpful or not.

These are just some of the reasons why employee training fails in certain workplaces. On the other hand, organizations that focus on three specific steps have shown to gain the biggest benefits of employee training.

VI. Three Steps to Implement an Employee Training Program That Delivers Results

The major issues that impact the delivery of a successful employee training program can be narrowed down to three crucial steps: plan, engage and measure. By focusing on and creating strategies for these areas, organizations can avoid or eliminate barriers to having a well-executed training program and better educated employees. Let's examine the three steps to ensuring both an immediate and long-term successful employee training program.

01: Plan

Picking an employee training program and rolling it out to your staff without first thinking about why you need training, what you want to train for, and how you're going to implement it will set an organization up for failure before they've even begun. Like launching any other endeavor, initiative or product, if you want your employee training program to work, your organization must come up with answers to a number of questions before taking steps towards investing in the right program.

Determine the training employees need to succeed

There are many different types of employee training courses and programs to choose from, but an organization must decide what they want to train for first. An organization looking to train new leaders may focus on leadership content. An organization with a specialized and technical workforce may focus on hard skills training. An organization that's highly regulated may need their workforce to have yearly compliance training. An organization wanting to provide their workforce access to a variety of courses to increase soft skills like communication, conflict management or productivity may want a large library to choose from. The answer to the question, "What kind of training do we want?", will set the foundation as you go forward with your planning.



Set training goals and objectives

An organization also has to determine what goals and objectives they want their training program to meet. Some of that will be answered when determining what kind of training your organization wants. For example, you may want to offer leadership training, hard skills training, or soft skills training, but organizations need to go further in their goal-setting to truly understand how they'll implement their training, what benefit it'll bring to employees and how they'll measure results.

Organizations can use [SMART goals](#) to further sharpen their training needs. For review, SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely. Having goals like training your employees in Excel or leadership are too vague and unhelpful, and will ultimately result in failed implementation. But setting goals like, “All members of the admin team will be trained on Intermediate Excel by the end of the month” or “All managers are required to take six courses in areas of leadership, communication and conflict resolution by the end of the quarter” are not only more helpful in determining what kind of training you want to have and which objectives you want to achieve, they already let you know how you'll go about measuring success.

SMART Goals

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Relevant
Timely

Consider your audience and content

Another area to consider is who your audience is, and if the content in your employee training program aligns with that audience. Think about how your teams work best and choose a training program that caters to them. For example, if your employees are highly autonomous and work independently, consider providing training that they can do independently, at their own pace. If your teams are highly collaborative and constantly interact with one another, consider providing training that they can do as a group.

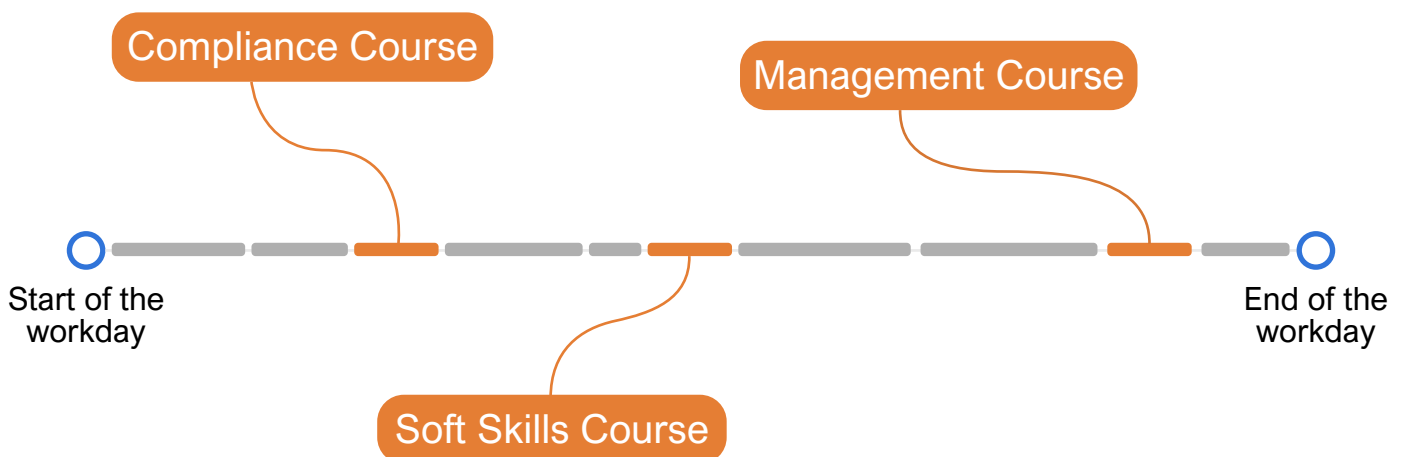
Additionally, you want to be cognizant of not only the topics in your training program, but the content and context of those programs. For example, if you work in a traditional workplace, make sure the scenarios present in the course content reflect a traditional workplace. If your team works in a frontline service industry, choose content that reflects those specific situations. Seeing themselves and their everyday workplace reflected in their training content will also help increase engagement and make training more applicable.

Finally, be sure to choose training content that's exciting and interactive. Your employees may not enjoy or engage with a one-hour video lecture, but they will most likely reap the benefits of interactive training with short video, animations, scenarios and quizzes.

Decide on a time commitment

You'll also want to determine what your approach will be to time commitment around employee training. If you commit to a training program with hour-long courses, when will your employees take them? If you encourage your employees to do their training during work hours, what will the impact be of taking an hour or two away from their job duties, and will it adversely affect productivity (and put the stress on your employees of having to decide, "Do I get my job done or do I do my training?"). If you want to preserve the workday for work, and want your employees to do their training outside of work hours, will you compensate them?

The best approach would be to find a training solution with shorter, "bite-sized" training courses that employees can fit into their workday without sacrificing productivity.



“ According to a [Training Industry Report](#), 90% of large and mid-sized companies that offer training use an LMS, as do 71% of small businesses. ”

When considering an LMS, organizations should look for the following features:

1 A robust, varied course library that provides the right content, in the right format, at the right time length for your team.

1

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2 The ability to create custom content for your workforce that tailors to your company or industry's specific training needs.

3 The option to brand the LMS to your organization's branding, so that the LMS appears to be a part of your internal offerings and so that employees will engage with a familiar-looking platform.

3

4

4 Easy set up so that an organization can get up and running right out of the box, and easy navigation so that employees can begin using the LMS immediately with little learning curve.

5 The ability to provide tracking and reporting on completion, so that managers or HR can see who's completing what when, and so that they can keep a record to measure success.

5

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6 Vendor support – ideally 24/7 – that can help troubleshoot any tech issues that may arise with the platform, and who can provide further customer support around custom course creation, library offerings and more.

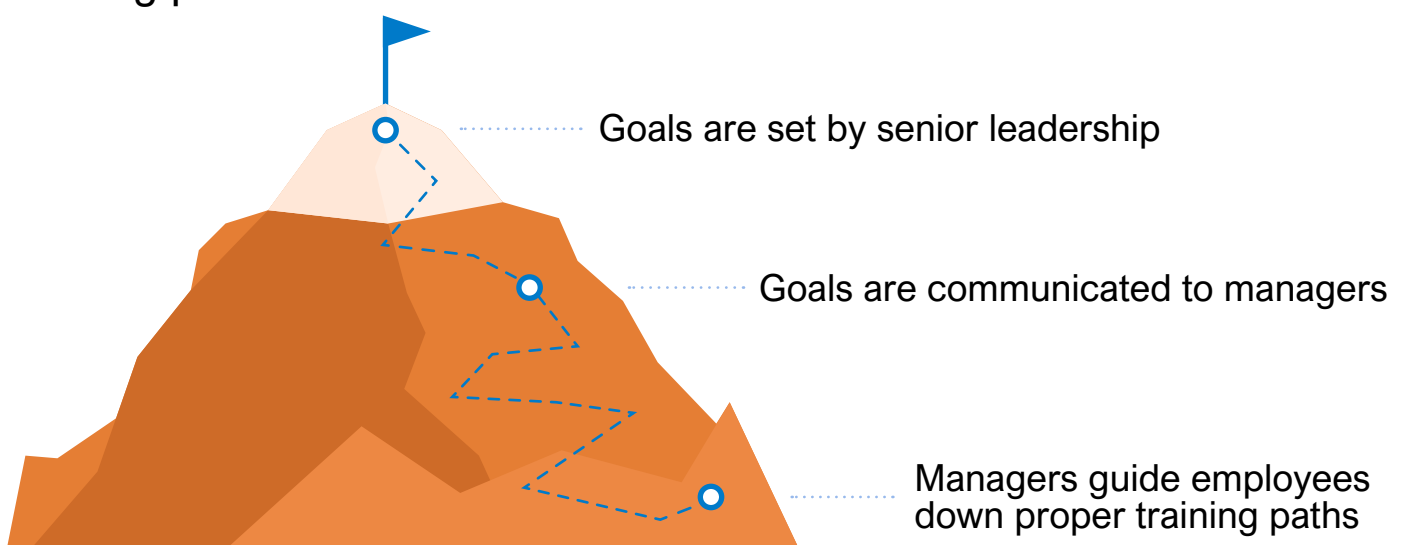
02: Engage

When it comes to increasing employee engagement with a training program, the solution isn't just found in the content, the time commitment and the format. Much of the success of employee training is due to how leadership communicates about, encourages and follows up on the training.

If employee training truly does increase retention, productivity and engagement, and is a draw to job seekers, an organization would want to maximize the benefits and get the most value they can from the program. There are a few ways leadership can accomplish this.

Communication before the launch is key, because leadership will not only get the chance to build excitement around the upcoming implementation, but can also outline the benefits for employees and affirm the organization's goals and objectives. In addition, this can signal to the workforce that senior leadership supports its value, and is leading the charge on implementation.

Once training is rolled out, don't just leave it up to the individual employee to figure out what courses they want to take, or what skills they should be learning. Ideally, training goals were set at the senior leadership level, and should be communicated to managers so that they can work with their reports to come up with a training schedule. Managers have a lot of leverage in guiding their employees on a training path.



One key component that can ensure success is to follow up with employees to see the effectiveness of their training. Managers should refer to their reports about their training, looking at whether it was completed, and if the new skills and knowledge have made a difference in their everyday work. Managers should also include training as part of the yearly performance review.

Another way to engage employees around training is for team leaders to assign a course to their team members to take together. Then, in the weekly team meeting or in a separate session, the team can discuss their takeaways from the course, and the impact it's had on their work. Team leaders can also set up friendly competitions to see who can complete the most training courses the fastest. Organizations can also send out weekly emails highlighting different featured courses.

Essentially, leaders should keep the excitement going around employee training, and weave it into daily operations as a way to increase productivity and train new leaders for the future. What leadership shouldn't do is treat employee training as just HR's responsibility, or leave employees to figure out training on their own.

03: Measure

As mentioned above, one of the ways employee training fails is when organizations never follow up about it with their employees to find out either if the training itself improved the employee's daily work life,

or if the courses were engaging, provided the right content and fit into their busy schedule. According to a Harvard Business Publishing article, “If we understand which content garners the highest ratings, where learning tasks are most likely to be completed, and over what time frame, we’re in a better position to provide the right resources.”

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Before you can measure success, you need to know what to measure. Create a series of key performance indicators, or KPIs, that will help you understand the effectiveness of your training. Some KPIs to include would be time to proficiency, knowledge retention, impact on organizational KPIs and impact on employee engagement.



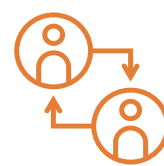
Time to proficiency



Knowledge retention



Impact on organizational KPIs



Impact on employee engagement

Once you have a set of KPIs in place, then you’ll know how to determine if your employee training is meeting your goals, and where to make improvements in the future.

One way to effectively track success is through manager interaction, as mentioned above. Since managers are in constant interaction with their employees, they'll be able to see if and how training has affected their performance, and can observe the impact training is having on team productivity, effectiveness and engagement overall.

Another way to track specific metrics is through reporting, which a good LMS will offer. This allows managers to view how many courses each employee has completed, which courses are still in progress, and their quiz scores to show their engagement.

VII. The Effort Is Worth the Reward

Implementing a successful employee training program doesn't have to be a monumental task, but does require a bit of effort in order to avoid common issues around planning, engagement and measurement that can stall a training program before it even begins. If an organization puts in the time, consideration and effort to create a solid plan before and after implementation, then they'll soon see the benefits and rewards of increased employee engagement, as well as a more knowledgeable and productive workplace.

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