

## Ten Tips: Selling the Need for Training

**H**ere in the US, we are still looking for the light at the end of the recessionary tunnel. When times are tough, one of the first things some companies choose to cut is employee training.

I remember meeting an HR client in Mexico for the first time. She told me she knew exactly the training she needed for the supervisors in her manufacturing plant. She wanted a three day "High Performance Teams" workshop. "I have two problems," she said. "I have to sell the CFO on the need. Then, I need to choose a provider." I was certain my company could take care of the latter. I made two suggestions.

- "Tell the CFO that if we do not achieve your (and his) objectives, I'll refund 50% of the fee.
- "Share these ten tips with him as you see fit."

She did. I'm pleased to say we did not have to refund any money! Indeed we continued working with her for the past three years. The CEO and his team have participated. So too have the Supervisors. Based on our experience, we created a special course for unionized employees - a first in that particular industry. The experience served to create a robust bond between HR and the C-suite.

***Here are the ten tips I gave our client to help "sell" the need for training - at a time when the company was scaling back discretionary spending:***

- 1.** Stress training as *investment*. Some people think training is optional, because they think of it as an expense. Think "human capital." While it's true that training can be costly up front, it's a long-term investment in the growth and development of your human *capital*.
- 2.** Determine your needs. Determine precisely what training you need. Decide what *skills* need improving to address current or future needs. Which ones will yield the biggest payback. Ask yourself, "How will this training benefit the bottom line?"
- 3.** Promote a culture of learning. If your business isn't learning, it's going to fall behind. Guaranteed. A business learns as its people learn. Pick your objectives carefully with line staff. Make sure you support them by providing the resources needed to accomplish them.
- 4.** Get management on board. Involve them. Ask someone senior to kick off the first session. Better yet, ask them to participate. It's an *investment*. You

may be amazed at what happens when you ask!

5. Start out small. Before rolling out your training program to the masses, rehearse with a small group of leaders and get feedback. This helps you *fine-tune* the training process. *(In the case I'm discussing, HR set up a video interview with the CEO and me. This got buy-in and helped smooth the processes).*
6. Choose quality instructors and materials. (I could make a shameless commercial pitch here! I'll resist the temptation!) Who you select to conduct the training will make a major difference in the success of your efforts. Think specialized, knowledgeable providers with low overhead. Where the "gurus" do the training and not their junior associates. Sometimes it's helpful to follow up with individualized coaching. Training is a process, not an event.
7. Find the right space: a training location that's conducive to learning. If you don't have comfortable facilities, think off-site. Your team will appreciate the change of scenery and will work harder.
8. Clarify connections. make sure trainees see the relevance of the training to their job. If not, they'll view the training sessions as a waste of valuable time. My company awards completion certificates at the end of the program. Employees love them.
9. Make it an ongoing process.. Motivate your leaders to grow professionally.
10. Measure results. Without measurable results, arguably nothing happened. Training without measurable results is just another expense. Determine what kind of growth or other measure is a reasonable result of the training. If you need to explain too much, the training is probably not relevant. The need should be self-evident to management.

**Corollary:** For state-of-the-industry team building, cross-cultural training and leadership development on a recessionary budget, call us! **(+1 203 268 3126)**