

Redesigning and Developing an Intensive and Engaging Employee Training Program

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Problem(s)

I work for an online marketing company that primarily works with small businesses, nonprofit organizations, and membership associations. We help them meet their marketing needs by using multiple campaign platforms and real-time reporting metrics. We offer email marketing, social media marketing, online survey, event hosting and marketing, digital storefronts, and local deals tools.

My title within the company is Learning Specialist and I belong to the New Hire Training Team, underneath a much larger training team umbrella. Our company employs over 1,300 employees with a third of those belonging to our support organization. Our training team consists of several different groups of trainers that range from New Hire training (we train newly hired employees) to Outside and Customer training (they host local seminars and online webinars for customers).

As our company continues to grow its customer base, our need for additional support staff continues to grow as well. On average, at least 25 new support representatives are hired each month across two locations. Our three week training program teaches the new hires about the company, its culture, how to use our suite of products, and then how to support the products to our customers, all while coaching them to use our products in a successful manner.

The company's current attrition and termination rates, within the support department, are at an all-time high. Many of these employees are leaving within the first three months after training has completed (whether voluntarily or involuntarily). Information collected from exit interviews shows that these employees are leaving due to lack of confidence when they begin taking calls on the support floor. Many of the reps feel that they do not retain enough information from training and they are unable to meet the standards required to excel within their role. There has also been a large call out for additional training to help retention rates as well as to help continue to educate our *current* employees so that they may continue to excel with the option to promote.

About two years ago, we started sending surveys to the new hires at the end of each week of the three week training program. The questions were designed to gauge the trainee's levels of enthusiasm, knowledge intake, and confidence. There were also several questions that asked for the trainee's input on our training program, specifically, the subjects and how they're taught.

The survey results showed several problems with our program:

- The program's curriculum reaches out to auditory and visual learners while completely leaving out kinesthetic learners.

- The trainees’ levels of confidence were extremely low. They felt ill-prepared to begin taking calls on the support floor, even after three full weeks of training.
- The trainee’s levels of enthusiasm were extremely low. Due to no dedicated support, the trainees felt that they were “locked out” and “left to fend for themselves.”
- Trainees stated that they were not retaining information due to many of the sessions lacking engagement and stimulation.
- The program’s knowledge assessments were too complicated due to lack of retention of the subject matter the trainees were being tested on.

Intervention

As one of two Learning Specialists on the New Hire Training Team, I have firsthand knowledge of how the entire training program works. After brainstorming with my training partner, we have developed a strong plan of action to redesign our current New Hire training program to include eLearnings and a nesting program. This plan will enable us to develop an intensive and engaging program to train and educate our new employees and to help set them up for better success within their new roles.

Right now, the training program for newly hired support reps is three weeks long. It’s facilitated by a trainer who stands in front of the training room and lectures with the aid of several PowerPoint presentations. Once the three weeks have completed, the new hires are then fully immersed in the call center environment. They take anywhere between 15 and 50 calls a day with only online FAQs and their cubicle neighbors for support. By redesigning the program to be eLearning based, we will be able to better teach to all types of learners in various environments.

Goals

Our plan to redesign and develop a new training program supports several goals:

Short Term	Implement engaging, informative, and thorough eLearnings into all subjects of training - setting our new hires up for success
	Shorten the New Hire Training program from three weeks to two
	Instill better confidence in new hires as they begin their roles on the support floor
	Provide constant support through a “nesting” program where each new hire is assigned a mentor until no longer needed
	Teach to all learning styles (auditory, visual, and kinesthetic) in various environments (collaboratively in a training room or alone in a cubicle or home office)
Long Term	Lower attrition and increase retention
	Pave the way for eLearnings to be used to educate <i>current</i> employees on product updates and enhancements

	Provide a fun and supportive work environment that encourages continuous learning and career development
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Plan

Our plan can be split into several steps:

1. Compile survey data and responses into collective and easy-to-read format
2. Meet with our stakeholders, subject matter experts, and leadership team to get buy-in for implementing eLearnings and the “nesting” program
3. Test and choose a learning management system as well as an eLearning program
4. Redesign all current sessions using eLearning program
5. Develop “nesting” program (develop mentor roles and search for potential candidates)
6. Test new courses and “nesting” program on a future new hire class
7. Report on findings to stakeholders, SMEs, and leadership team
8. Make improvements to new program based on findings
9. Implement successful redesign to all future classes with continuous improvements
10. Build eLearnings for current support reps to continue education beyond new hire training

My training partner and I fully believe that these ten main steps can help us achieve our above mentioned goals. To set our plan in motion, I am going to utilize Ely’s eight conditions that prove successful implementation of innovations (Surry and Ely, 2001):

1. Dissatisfaction with the status quo	The existing training sessions lack engagement and only cater to specific types of learners. New hires complain of lack of information retention.
2. Knowledge and skills exist	Knowledge and skills with computers is mandatory for all employees. Most of the training team is already quite familiar with developing and publishing eLearnings.
3. Availability of resources	Each employee is in possession of a company computer or laptop. All created resources and eLearnings would be housed on Box, the companywide share cloud, where anyone within the company can access them.
4. Availability of time	New Hires are required to spend their first three weeks fully immersed in training. Current support representatives work different shifts throughout the day, but they can request to have hours scheduled specifically for training opportunities. Availability of time would never be an issue.
5. Rewards and/or incentives exist	Incentives for the company would be lower attrition, higher retention, happier employees, and more satisfied customers. Rewards for the employees would include better call statistics (average handle time, average hold time, calls per hour, customer survey scores) and the possibility of promotion.
6. Participation	The training team works very closely with management in all stages of trainings.
7. Commitment	The New Hire Training Team will be fully committed to the redesign and development of this program as it’s what we’re paid to

	do. We're also a part of the company and we genuinely want to see it succeed.
8. Leadership	All leadership will be on board with this implementation as everyone in the support organization has the same common goals (listed above).

Evaluation

Throughout the two “new” weeks of new hire training, we will continue to send out surveys to each trainee. As each month goes on, we will continuously make improvements to the program based on the survey feedback. The criteria we will use to evaluate the success of the changed program will be as follows:

Survey responses based on questions regarding:

- Training style
 - Facilitator led eLearnings
 - Non-facilitator led eLearnings
 - Instructor led classroom sessions
- Environmental issues and impacts
 - Classroom setting
 - Cubicle setting
 - Home office setting
- Session content
 - Engaging
 - Informative
 - Inspiring
 - Fun
 - Knowledgeable content
 - Content appropriate to role

Data from three months’ classes going through new training and “nesting” program:

- Attrition
- Retention
- Customer Survey Scores
- Average Hold Time (AHT)
- Average Calls per Hour (ACH)
- Average Call Time (ACT)
- Weekly Mentor feedback
 - How trainees are doing each week with information retention
 - How much trainees need to utilize online FAQs
 - How many times trainees reach out to the Tier II Tech Support Team

After each new monthly new hire class, my partner and I will conduct meetings with each section of our leadership team (which consists of training management, support organization management - mentors, team leads, group managers, senior managers, and the executive team over the support organization) as well as with our stakeholders and subject matter experts from other departments. To be as successful as we possibly can with our new training program, we will need to constantly keep all of these groups abreast with what is happening each month, and the contrary. By utilizing the data received from the trainees’ survey responses along with the shared information from our leadership meetings, the new training program should be a complete success.

Resources

Surry, D.W., & Ely, D.P. (2001). Adoption, diffusion, implementation, and institutionalization of educational innovations. In R. Reiser & J. V. Dempsey (Eds.), *Trends and issues in instructional design and technology*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall. Draft online:

<http://www.southalabama.edu/coe/bset/surry/papers/adoption/chap.htm>