

Introduction

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Even when people directly ask for training, there still is a certain amount of effort necessary to ensure the training is attended - and attended with the correct attitude.

Most adults like to know what to expect and desire a certain amount of control over their environment. A training session can introduce unknowns and uncertainty, which can make people hesitant to get involved in training efforts.

This document explains some methods used successfully in organizations to promote training efforts. Synergest encourages you to use these methods in your own organization.

Training – One Piece of the Pie

Best practices in Human Performance Technology (HPT) suggest that training directly affects only skills and knowledge, and thus only directly affects the performance variable “job management” (refer to the graphic below). Training the right people with the right skills and knowledge, however, can influence all of the other organizational, process, and job variables. Training and coaching can only go so far. To cause positive change in an organization, management must show visible commitment. Without visible commitment, any training effort runs the risk of being seen as the latest “fad of the month.”

Organizational Goals Business strategy	Organizational Design Org chart	Organizational Management Coordinating dept
Process Goals Balancing goals	Process Design Efficient methods	Process Management Coordinating work
Job Goals Support processes	Job Design Safety and skills	Job Management Individual feedback Skills & knowledge

Marketing Tip #1 – Visible Executive Commitment

The key here is *visible*. People throughout the organization have to see management support for the training efforts as well as management's expectations of the result of the training. This can take the form of (listed in order of importance - not sequence):

- ✘ the senior executives take the training first themselves
- ✘ a kick-off meeting or "town hall" gathering where one or more senior executives explain the training efforts in person to the people in the organization
- ✘ a memo or e-mail from a senior executive spelling out the importance of the training, and explaining the reason for the training

Marketing Tip #2 – Use More Than Three Methods to Advertise

Advertisers call it the "Rule of Three." The first few times people see a message, they are not very likely to pay attention to the message. However by the third time a person sees a message, subconsciously they start to pay attention to the message. Additional exposure to the message increases significantly the chance that the message will sink in.

Note that by methods, you must use different mediums. Putting up ten posters throughout the building is still considered one method. Some methods used successfully in the past:

- ✘ Poster-sized signage throughout the facility or building
- ✘ Paper-based memos or notices to each individual
- ✘ Mention in the organization's newsletter
- ✘ E-mail
- ✘ Listing or highlight on the organization's Intranet (internal) or website (external)
- ✘ Voice-mail or voice-mail "blasts" to groups of people
- ✘ Face-to-face mention of the training from the person coordinating the training
- ✘ Executive mention of the training

Marketing Tip #3 – Target the Training and the Message

It is usually a good idea to tailor the training to the specific needs of groups of people in an organization, rather than conduct the same "mass market" training for the entire organization. However, even if the same training (for the most part) is being conducted, the message can be tailored to each group of people in the organization.

For example, accountants have different job skills and needs than IT personnel. When marketing the training to both groups, remember *WIIFM* - What's In It For Me. Highlight the benefits of the training as it applies to each group individually. The accountants might benefit from the training by learning a faster way to accomplish a task, while the IT personnel might appreciate how the training provides them with tighter change control processes. Summary: use different advertisements for different groups highlighting what each group finds important to their job. Don't forget the WIIFM for management! What is the benefit to management? Tell it!

Marketing Tip #4 – Get Famous Facilitators

Engage workshop facilitators (or “trainers” as the case may be) that have some drawing power. Perhaps the facilitator wrote a book, or was interviewed by a national magazine, or won an award – whatever the case may be, let people know about it! Even the most cynical of people are usually intrigued by someone in the news. Use the “star power” of the facilitator to help promote the training efforts.

Marketing Tip #5 – Use Regularly Scheduled Programs

If people in the organization know that once a month, perhaps even on a set week of the month, there is a training session on something; they will start to expect some type of training being available. This also helps with the scheduling of time away from the job. With regularly scheduled programs, you could even have people checking in with you, to find out what training is happening that month. Instead of chasing people to sign up, they are now coming to you.

Marketing Tip #6 – Publish a Training Roadmap

Many times busy individuals cannot see the overall picture in an organization’s training efforts. To these individuals, each training session can seem to be an unrelated one, two, or three day session with no apparent connection to the rest of the training efforts. If there is a bigger picture or the organization is attempting to create an overall result, let people know about it.

Marketing Tip #7 – Advertise Successes

Word of mouth is the best form of advertising. Get previous attendees to talk or write about the benefits they have experienced from the training. It could be something as simple or informal as a three-sentence paragraph about what they are applying back on the job. And if you cannot find anyone able to write three sentences about the benefits of the training they took, it is time to evaluate that training!

Marketing Tip #8 – Mmmm, Donuts...

There is nothing wrong with bribing people with food. Consider putting a box of donuts (or cookies, candies, chocolate bars - whatever!) in the break room with another copy of the training notice posted above the box. Most people will look at such a notice in exchange for a tasty treat or two.

Marketing Tip #9 – Be Fun and Creative

This is similar to Tip #2 and directly related to Tip #1. If you use innovative and fun methods to stir up interest in the training, you have another method of exposing people to the message, and you also show management’s support for the training efforts. Somebody in charge must be on board if you are allowed to use balloons (for example) to remind people of the training!

Next Steps

Consider reading another of Synergest's White Papers describing the *Synergest Solution Process*. In that document, Synergest explains how our consultants formally prepare for training and consulting efforts. These same steps can be used by organizations internally to better prepare for training, coaching, or consulting efforts. Note that after the training, there are additional steps taken to ensure optimal skills transfer. One of the core beliefs of Human Performance Technology (HPT) is to focus on the outcomes - in this case, *improved performance on the job as a result of the training*.

Here are a few follow-up steps that increase the transfer of learning to on-job performance:

1. **Finishing the workshop** - At the end of each Synergest workshop, the consultant leads a formal wrap-up and debrief for that particular workshop. This usually involves one last experiential activity, to drive home or solidify the learning that took place. Participants are required to list "next steps" for themselves, to encourage the use of these skills back in the workplace. Each workshop also has a Level 1 and Level 2 assessment, which can be used at the end of the workshop.
2. **Post workshop meeting** - Immediately after the training, the organization should hold its own debrief with the participants, to discuss what was learned and how it can be applied. This seemingly simple activity helps reinforce the importance the organization feels for the training. This also helps remind the participants in yet another way that they should look for ways to practice the skills and techniques discussed in the workshop.
3. **Track skills transfer** - Whether through the use of Synergest's Quasi-Level 3 assessment or other technique, the organization should evaluate the use of the skills and techniques promoted in the training. Are people using the skills and techniques taught?
4. **Performance expectations:** Ensure that trainees know they are expected to use their new skills on the job and that they will get feedback to ensure they are applying the skills appropriately. Ensure that managers and supervisors expect the trainees to use the new skills and knowledge.
5. **Provide Performance Support:** Post training support can take many forms. Coaching is very effective. If the individual's manager is to provide the coaching, it is best that he or she has also gone through the training, so they know what to ask about and what to expect.
6. **Keep the concepts fresh** - The organization should hold occasional lunch meetings to promote discussion about the training that took place. Peer-to-peer discussions are powerful events that can win over those hesitant to change their behavior. Monthly e-mails reminding participants about a "skill of the month" is also a good motivator. Every Synergest workshop has a password protected participant-only website, to help keep the ideas fresh and encourage their use.
7. **Encourage further development** - The organization should consider a formal development path for each individual, and reward continued development. Even if the organization does not directly provide the training, by posting information about other development opportunities, the organization can emphasize the seriousness of the training efforts.

✘ NOTE: *Coaching* - Synergest consultants can continue the learning experience for participants by providing coaching at various degrees of involvement or seriousness. Coaching can take the form of a monthly face-to-face meeting, or just an occasional telephone call to check on progress. Advances in electronic communication make it easy for Internet or e-mail-based interaction. Synergest consultants have many methods by which they can successfully encourage maximum skills transfer.