



GETTING MORE FROM YOUR TRAINING BUDGET

With training budgets getting the squeeze, more and more companies are scrutinising the effectiveness of their training programmes, asking “are we getting value for money?” As the numbers of warning letters and consent decrees reach unprecedented levels regulators are also questioning the effectiveness of training programmes.

So how effective is yours? Well, if a recent survey is anything to go by, the answer doesn't make pleasant reading. McKinseys conducted a survey of over 1400 companies, including many in the pharma sector ('Building Organisational Capabilities. McKinsey Global Survey Results March 2010'). Their conclusions:

- > The 'vast majority of training programs are ineffective and failed to improve understanding and performance'
- > That training methods have remained very traditional and that many companies have failed to adopt a more effective and scientific approach

Clearly a lot of time and resource are being wasted and valuable training budget squandered.

Thanks to vast amounts of research into 'adult learning' we now know how to improve training effectiveness. In fact, NSF has been applying these principles for years in course design and delivery. This is probably why delegates keep telling us our courses are 'unique', 'memorable' and 'different'.

So, improving the effectiveness of your training programme and getting more from your training budget is possible, providing you get the basics right! Here some essential rules to follow:

1. GET PEOPLE IN THE MOOD!

All learning is what we call 'state dependent'. If people don't want to learn, if they are not 'in the mood', you're wasting your time. I had the pleasure of experiencing a GMP 'refresher' training session recently. Operators, most of which didn't want to be there, dutifully filed in at the end of their long shift. Most were tired,

hungry and thinking of their commute home. A few acknowledged the heroic antics of the trainer and the seemingly endless stream of PowerPoints. I lost count at 35. A short questionnaire followed, before the 'GMP refresher training' box was ticked. Job done, at least for another year. Did everyone pass the 'assessment'? Of course. Will the training add value and improve performance? I doubt it. Will the company get a 'return on its investment'? Not in a million years.

Remember:

- > People only learn if they want to; you can't force people to learn anything. The job of your training provider is to ensure people are open to learning, keen, willing and able. This takes real skill
- > Stress and fatigue kill effective learning every time. The training environment must be informal and welcoming. Everyone must feel safe and relaxed... do everything possible to avoid the 'classroom' layout and 'feel'
- > Make it participative. Learning is an active, not a passive process
- > Inject plenty of variety
- > Above all, make it fun. If you haven't got a laugh in the first few minutes it's going to be a long and fruitless session

If you want to change behaviour and improve performance get everyone in the mood first!

2. SATISFY EVERYONE'S 'PREFERRED LEARNING STYLE'

- > Although our brains have infinite capacity we all absorb information differently
- > Some of us are visual learners, preferring pictures, diagrams, mind maps and the like. In fact, anything other than words



- > Auditory learners on the other hand, learn best from the discussions
- > Kinaesthetic learners 'learn by doing'. They have to get their hands dirty. For these folks classroom sessions are boring and tedious and completely ineffectual
- > The fourth group are the Intellectual learners who learn through problem solving

So, if you want your training to be effective find out the learning styles of your audience and then design your programme accordingly. The days of 'death by PowerPoint' are long gone. Every NSF course is designed to meet all learning styles, not just one or two.

3. SWITCH ON THEIR 'RETICULAR ACTIVATING SYSTEM'. THE 'DOORWAY' TO EFFECTIVE LEARNING

- > Our brain has an awful lot to cope with. On top of keeping our vital organs and systems running smoothly, no mean task, it must also make sense of the external world. In fact it's bombarded by billions of information 'bits' every minute of every day. To prevent cerebral meltdown, evolution has provided us with a neat little filtering system called the RAS (The Reticular Activating System). This is the part of our brain that decides what enters our long term memory and what stays out. If you don't activate the RAS, the door remains closed and information is soon forgotten.

RAS activation is vital. Without this nothing is absorbed and trainers, even the best performers, are wasting their time. Our tutors know how to 'flick the switch' within minutes.

4. ALL LEARNING IS 'SUBCONSCIOUS'

Information is first absorbed by our conscious 'working brain'. The only problem is this has very limited capacity and no long term memory capability; in fact it can only cope with 7 facts +/- 2 at any one time! This is the part of our brain that remembers telephone numbers and the like, but not for long. For effective learning to take place information must be moved from the working,



conscious brain, to subconscious brain quickly, ideally within 30-40 minutes.

If you don't move the information from the working brain quickly it will be lost for ever.

5. TURNING 'INFORMATION' INTO IMPROVED PERFORMANCE: REPLACING OLD HABITS WITH NEW ONES

NSF courses are designed to change the way people think and act. This is easier said than done because we are all creatures of habit. Over time any repetitive task, even ways of thinking, become a habit. People act without consciously thinking about what they are doing. When 'training' introduces something new our brains really struggle, preferring to stick with the old ways of thinking. In fact, old habits are actually impossible to break. They can only be replaced with new ones which, through repetition and practice, become stronger. Although 'old habits die hard' those of you who have attended our courses will be familiar with the techniques we use to accept new ways of thinking.

Skilled trainers have the tools and techniques to replace old habits with new ones.

TO ASSESS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR TRAINING PROVIDER ASK FOUR SIMPLE QUESTIONS:

- > "How do they get people 'in the mood'?" ...if they don't know they're wasting your money



- > “How do they identify participants’ learning styles and design sessions to accommodate all four?”
- > “How do they flick the RAS switch?” ...or do they leave the door closed?
- > “How do they weaken old habits and replace them with new ones?” ...if they don’t old behaviours and ways of working will remain
- > Very comprehensive course books (not just slides) to satisfy intellectual learners as well as provide an invaluable reference for years to come
- > Help you provide a training environment that is an ideal learning environment
- > Provide you with the best tutors that money can buy. With an average of 28 years ‘hands on’ experience our tutors have that rare ability to inspire, engage, entertain and educate... not just ‘pass on’ information.

At NSF we practice what we preach; our objective is to educate, not train. There is a big difference.

‘Education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten’

We design our in house and residential courses to change the way people think and therefore behave. They leave us able to make a difference. By adopting these methods our customised ‘in house’ courses are renowned for acting as a catalyst for lasting change and improvement.

Before every course we:

- > Work with you, our clients, to really understand
 - The motivation behind the course (the big picture)
 - The background and experience of the target audience
 - Your company’s products, processes and procedures
 - Any specific ‘learning objectives’
 - Design the course to suit all learning types
 - Customised team work exercises for the kinaesthetic learners
 - High quality presentations for the visual types

Although we’re constantly striving to get better our clients tell us we do a pretty good job. Just visit our website and have a look at the course feedback comments. The phrase ‘I learnt a lot’ crops up regularly.

As many of you know, our QP education programme has been running for almost 20 years. Over this period 96% of NSF candidates pass the rigorous, independent assessment process. How we educate seems to work; what we teach seems to ‘stick’.

David Begg used to say

‘If you think training is expensive, try ignorance’

For the short-sighted, training is usually seen as a cost, not an investment. For others it’s the life blood of their company. Ongoing education is a must if you want the motivated, flexible and multi-skilled workforce so vital to your future. Whichever camp you fall into one thing is for sure... training effectiveness must be improved.

If you need help in getting more from your training budget or more information on the tools and techniques for effective training contact me at martinlush@nsf.org

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