

Fulcrum Search Science Inc.

Training Without a Trainer



"Profits are down. Problems are up. Pressure is building, and you can cut the tension with a knife." That's life.

So what can you do about it?

Some companies faced with this situation hire professional trainers or speakers to motivate and bring in fresh ideas and new skills. And to help the company boost sagging spirits, revenues, and profits.

Keynotes and seminars are very useful. Thousands of executives, managers, and companies will attest to that. As a professional speaker on leadership and presentations for over twenty years, I have seen how effective keynote speeches and seminars can be.

Yet there are several downsides. Professional speakers or consultants cost thousands of dollars. The time cost - for you, your managers, and staff to attend these meetings - is even higher; and as one-time events, their impact is short-lived.

So looking at it from your perspective, I need to ask these questions: Is that money being spent as wisely as possible? How can you get the biggest bang for the training buck?

Here is my conclusion:

Many companies could be saving thousands of dollars annually by doing some of the training themselves.

That may sound strange coming from a professional coach. It seems a bit strange to say it. But it's true.

HOW TO SAVE BIG MONEY

If your company is stagnant or failing, or you need a kick in the bottom line, don't start by spending thousands to hire an "expert." Try the twenty-dollar solution instead. Use a book.

That's right. Use one of the many excellent books on leadership and management. (Go to a good business bookstore. Find one that speaks to you as you look at it on the shelf, or get a recommendation from a friend.)

Then read it. If you find it insightful or thought provoking, buy a copy for every member of your staff.

Next, set up a weekly morning meeting, roughly an hour long. Start thirty minutes before the work day begins, and end thirty minutes into the day (so both the employee and the company have made an "investment"). Serve fresh croissants, good coffee, tea, and juice. Make the meeting informal and inviting.

Begin by sharing what you thought about the book and your vision for these meetings. Ask employees to read a chapter each week. Then discuss the book, in groups of eight or fewer, one chapter at a time.

YOU WILL GET EXPERT ADVICE

Worried about using such a "simple" solution? Don't be.

There are many books on the market by highly qualified leadership coaches. Stephen Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* is just one example. Whatever you buy, if it's by a respected author/trainer, you are in fact consulting an "expert" to find out what to do. However, you will be using them the way they were meant to be used.

Hearing or seeing a good idea once is not enough. You and your staff need to remember it - and implement it - to turn your company around. That takes time and repetition.

This is the reason for holding your weekly croissant circles.

People first need to read the book themselves. To mull it over. Then in your meetings, they will get to hear what you and others think, to express themselves, and to say what mattered or made sense to them. That is where real learning, and change, begins.

Rather than telling people what to do, find out what ideas excite or speak to them. Ask them what they would do to improve the organization. If you find just one thing they want to do, it will have more long-term benefits than ten things they are told to do. Because the motivation, the spark, comes from inside. This is the fire you want to build. More internal motivation will lead to less external motivation. That is, you will spend less time trying to create change, and more in enabling people to do work they care about - work that adds value to your organization. And their energy, drive, and focus will light the spark in others.

NOT ONE SESSION BUT CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Working with a powerful book will give you many months of payoffs. It may be tough to get rolling at first, but you will gather momentum over the four or five weeks it takes to read it. And the benefits will last beyond the last chapter.

You will be encouraging staff to share ideas and build positive relationships, rather than the kind they now develop in gossip circles. They will start having more fun at work.

You will be building in continuous learning. Your group will start looking for other ideas to act on, or bringing in other books to discuss. They may even identify areas where they would like to learn more. At that stage you can bring in an expert to speak, train, or coach them in specific areas.

And there's more. Your staff will see you are serious about change, because you are involved, sharing yourself, and willing to listen to them and act on their ideas. They will also begin to see the power they have to affect the future of the organization.

With opportunities to develop their own ideas and solutions, guided by some of the world's greatest minds and your caring support, your people will find that leadership does not just come from head office. They will find that they have it within themselves.

Peter Urs Bender, CSP, author of the best-selling books, Leadership from Within and Secrets of Power Presentations. The above is an excerpt from his bestselling book, Leadership From Within.