

 WHITE PAPER

# 5 Reasons Employee Training Fails, and What to do About it

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many organisations facilitate training for employees and it's easy to see why. Bringing benefits such as improved engagement, productivity and staff retention, there's no question that training plays a valuable role in driving the business forward. However, in today's globally connected business environment, are traditional approaches to training still effective?

From losing your audience by bombarding them with one-way messages to educating them about an irrelevant topic, this paper explores five key areas where your employee training can fail as well as advice to avoid these pitfalls. The world of business is changing and it's time for training to follow suit. By changing your training methods you can both improve business efficiency and make sure your budget is not poured down the drain. So why not give it a go?

## INTRODUCTION

Many companies choose to invest in corporate training for their employees because it is a great way to improve skills, boost morale and build good teams and work processes. But are traditional training methods still effective? And is this training still relevant to today's evolving business landscape?

To maximise the impact of your training investment, you need to understand how to choose the right training programmes, when to arrange training and how to select training for the future. Training must be geared to the needs of your staff, the way you do business and the future growth of your company. The perfect training course is one that excites, interests and engages the audience, which encourages them to make use of the training when they get back to their desks. Whether it's a one day induction course or a longer term formal qualification course, delivering the right training in the right way is so important.

## SPARE THEM THE SLIDESHOW

How many times have you experienced 'death by PowerPoint'? These are the courses and presentations that take up great swathes of your time with endless (and often pointless) slide shows. Very often a presentation of this nature is shown in a stuffy dark classroom and consists of mind-numbingly boring content on poorly designed slides that simply repeat what is being said by the presenter.

Thankfully, the days of the slideshow are numbered with more and more training courses tapping into video, interactive learning, discussion and role play. Keeping an audience engaged is one of the hardest parts of delivering training. Many candidates enter a course expecting to be bored or to be able to sit at the back of class updating their Facebook status. Training time is precious time and you are paying for it. By choosing the right training you can be sure that time and money is spent effectively and that you get the best return.

In this paper we will explore the five reasons that training fails and five ways you can improve the way that your workforce is trained by choosing effective courses that go on delivering long into the future.

## TRAINING IN THE 21ST CENTURY - BREAKING DOWN THE LEARNING BARRIERS

We've already established that the best training programmes are those which hold the audience's attention and which give them the skills they need to reach peak performance and achieve the strategic objectives of your organisation. Blended learning for example uses a variety of training methods that help you to reach these goals and to also save time and money. And guess what? There is not a PowerPoint slide in sight. Blended training may include:

- 3D virtual learning and video tuition
- Face to face training
- Self-paced learning and webinars
- eLearning and social learning

Training of this nature is stimulating and provokes discussion. It is dynamic and vital for learning new business skills, and because it is delivered at a faster pace, this type of training saves your business time and money. No longer do you have to send your teams halfway across the country to learn. High quality training can be arranged at your business premises or even delivered to employees' internet-enabled devices.

Skillsoft offers a wide range of stimulating, engaging and effective blended learning options. eLearning is becoming more and more popular as organisations realise the potential of training staff at their own pace and with the least impact to productivity.

## 1. LOSING YOUR AUDIENCE

The thought of a formal training session can strike panic and a sense of foreboding in the coolest of business professionals. Whilst training is often essential, it's also important to ensure that training is effective and enjoyable. Few people enjoy a boring lecture and even less people enjoy this type of training when they could be back at their desk making money or doing something they think is more useful with their time.

'One way traffic' training involves one person speaking to his or her audience. There is no interaction and no discussion except for perhaps a quick question and answer session at the end. This type of training has had its day and often results in resentment and loathing throughout those who are requested to attend.

Dynamic and creative training courses on the other hand create a buzz around your workplace and get people talking. These are the training sessions that ensure the highest attention span, the best turnout and the best returns.

Whilst training needs to be formal to a degree, a fun and engaging environment can still be created. Breaking the ice by allowing trainees to introduce themselves and work together is a great way to ensure groups interact and bounce ideas off of each other.

Through planning group exercises, getting everybody talking about the training modules they are learning and guiding everybody through tougher parts of the training course, training takes on a life of its own and becomes enjoyable and memorable.

Nobody really wants to be confined to a desk or table for hours on end being talked at. People want to move around, share ideas and interact on a one to one or group level. This is even better if you are training entire teams at once as it can really help to inject a sense of togetherness that can be re-enacted back in the workplace.

It's important to arrange training that respects that everybody has different learning styles and rates. Not everybody is going to want to lead a discussion or be led. A good training course is one that allows everybody to get involved through a range of different methods.

Training is evolving. It needs to evolve. We recognise the need to provide as many training outlets as possible so they can be accessed on the move, in the classroom and in the workplace.

In response to these requirements Skillsoft offers a range of memorable and engaging video-based presentations from some of the world's most respected and recognised business leaders. Our 50 Lessons collection features real-life experiences retold in story format by renowned leaders and gives valuable "take aways" that can be applied in the real world of business. We also offer a Leadership Development Channel collection that gives users access to over 2,000 on-demand videos featuring presentations from best-selling business authors, experts and executives.

## 2. DULL TRAINING BREEDS CONTEMPT

The key to workplace training success is knowing how to create training courses that add value and which are delivered in an engaging way. There is no getting away from the fact that some training course subject matter is considered boring. However, this doesn't mean material needs to be delivered in a dull and uninteresting way.

In fact, education should never be boring. The brain is a fickle thing and the moment it detects that the information it is being fed is tedious it will start to switch off and this is when daydreams, doodles and naps set in.

Many training providers put too much effort into the subject matter itself without thinking about how they are going to deliver it. Both factors are equally as important and need a lot of thought. A boring class is often the sign of a training provider who hasn't put enough effort into winning their students over.

Good training is all about putting the energy back into workplace education so that employees look forward to their session and give it their undivided attention.

eLearning and blended learning techniques give employees access to a wider range of training resources than ever before. They can watch videos, take quizzes, interact with others on the same course and revise topics at their leisure.

Learning can soar when people enjoy themselves. They become more attentive, more engaged and more able to take information in. Good training courses can also help to forge bonds between individuals and teams taking the training at the same time. By using video, discussion, interactive learning modules, fun tests, and perhaps a little competitive team rivalry, you can ensure training subject matter is absorbed effectively.

Learning can be ordinary or extraordinary. At Skillsoft we build our learning solutions with the latter in mind and we would be delighted to tell you more about our innovative approach to workplace learning. In addition to traditional training methods we have developed our training modules to meet the growing needs of business in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Virtual classes, video presentations, simulations and digital books are just some of the learning solutions we have to offer and we are constantly developing our training products.

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### 3. IRRELEVANT TRAINING MATERIAL AND CONTENT

There are few things worse than attending a training course only to find that the training modules are either irrelevant to you or even worse the subject being taught. Training courses need to be tailored to ensure they hit their goal head-on – to teach the student new skills that can be used to achieve team and company objectives.

Organisations need to review their training programmes on a regular basis, making sure they are providing value in terms of the training itself and the return on investment for the business.

The purpose of training is to develop and nurture the skills of your workforce so employees are able to perform their jobs more effectively. Training therefore needs to be relevant and up to date as well as meeting the objectives that exist in today's world of business. Technology and business are areas that are evolving all the time and this means that training often needs to crank things up a notch in order to keep up.

Targeted training also means targeting the right training courses and the right provider. Very often an HR department will stick with one training provider because they have formed a good relationship with the company and get discounted rates. What they often fail to see is that the training that is being delivered has not moved on in years and that training techniques and materials have become stagnant.

When planning a new training programme, those responsible for training within an organisation should consider the following factors:

- What skills and competencies are required across the organisation?
- Are there skills gaps across the organisation? Where are they?
- Does the organisation have a training strategy that will ensure training is invested in with the objectives of the company in mind?
- Has the organisation developed an implementation plan? How and when will training be delivered?
- What are the KPIs for ROI?

Training costs can prove to be a significant expense for any company and as a result this area is often the first to face cuts when profits are low. In fact, this can be the biggest mistake a company can make. By investing in certain areas of the workforce such as sales and marketing, a company can slowly start to see significant improvements to their balance sheet. It's all about targeting the right training, at the right time and choosing the right areas of your business to train.

#### 4. FAILING TO MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF TRAINING

Measuring the success of any training programme is a crucial way of proving the cost effectiveness of the training and its impact on your business. Surprisingly, very few companies do this and have no idea whether the training provided any real value to the business.

Ideally, a clear and defined set of objectives should be set before training starts. These objectives should be achievable and measurable. Measuring the success of training helps you to plan workplace education in the future. These results will help you to build a training programme that can be adapted to changing company culture and the business landscape in general.

All objectives should be made clear before the course gets under way so that trainees know what is expected of them and why they are being trained. So often, training courses are arranged in a haphazard way leaving trainees confused as to why they are in the classroom and about the subject matter being taught. This is especially the case with compulsory training, e.g. health and safety training. Just because training is compulsory doesn't mean it should be taken for granted that everybody knows why they are there.

Training can be measured in a number of ways. A survey is one of the best ways of obtaining feedback and any survey should ideally be presented to students directly after the training whilst feelings and memories are still fresh. Surveys allow you to clearly measure the success of the training and also allow trainees to reflect on the training they have received.

If your company conducts one to one appraisals on a regular basis, this is another great way to obtain feedback on training that has been given and in defining training that needs to be given in the future. Ask managers and supervisors to submit the feedback from their one to one discussions with staff so that you can build an accurate picture of the way training is received across your organisation.

And most importantly, evaluate the results of the training. Try to measure levels of productivity before and after the training course. For example, do trainees now understand how to answer phones in the correct manner? Is customer feedback improving? Are employees reporting IT problems to the Helpdesk in the proper way?

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## 5. FAILING TO 'SELL' THE TRAINING TO YOUR EMPLOYEES

The last thing you want is for training in your workplace to be seen as a complete waste of time. It's really important to gain the understanding and buy-in of your employees when building your training programmes. Unfortunately, many companies simply send out an email telling employees they are booked on a training course and include very little detail. This can often leave employees confused as to what they will be learning and why. When a clear explanation of the training is given along with clear objectives, trainees can enter the training room or login to interactive training knowing exactly what is going to be taught and what is expected of them once the training is over. Training that is put into practice in the workplace is another great way to demonstrate ROI.

An approach that many companies are now taking is to build a company training portfolio detailing the training that is available to employees and how employees can go about enrolling. Details can be published on a company intranet or in the staff handbook and made readily available to anybody interested in booking their place.

Of course, this takes us back to targeting the training in the appropriate manner. All training requests should ideally be approved by a line manager or supervisor and put forward to the HR department or an individual responsible for arranging training.

Targeted training of a high quality helps to motivate staff and increase productivity. Employees need the best tools available in order to do their job well and this includes good training that is evaluated and revised on a regular basis. A structured training programme is easy to manage and ensures your employees know they have the support mechanisms in place when they require further training that directly affects their job role. In order for training to take place, you need buy-in from three groups:

- Executive and senior level managers
- Middle managers and supervisors
- Employees

If you are looking to introduce a new training programme, starting at the top is the best approach. By winning the approval of top level managers you give your pitch credibility when selling the training to the rest of the organisation. Identify the training priorities of each department or group as each will have a different focus of concern.

You can also demonstrate that training is a necessity through quantitative and qualitative analysis. Audit the current skills gaps prior to arranging training and then analyse the effects training has on performance and productivity. Managers are focused on operations and will want to see clear benefits of the training that is taking their employees away from the workplace.

With Skillsoft's vast range of learning solutions you can get to work today on building the perfect training programme to suit your organisation. We can help you to not only plan that training, but to implement training across your company and to evaluate its progress.

## CONCLUSION

The world of business is changing and training needs to follow suit. By revising and improving the way training is delivered, business objectives will be achieved in a more timely and accurate manner and productivity will also improve company-wide.

We are no longer tethered to the classroom where workplace learning is concerned, employees no longer need to take days out of the office to learn new skills. Today, training can be conducted in the workplace, on the train, and at home thanks to the explosion of internet-enabled devices and interactive training courses.

Building a 21st century workforce means using 21<sup>st</sup> century training methods and nurturing your employees so they have the tools, skills and knowledge they need to do their job well. Whilst classroom training is still effective, it's also important to identify new methods of training that allow trainees to learn at their own pace or in a format that best suits their needs.

Management and employee buy-in are crucial to introducing any new training programme, as is the evaluation of any training that takes place. Until the economy recovers, many organisations are taking a tight hold of their training budget reins and this means any training booked needs to provide as much value as possible.


Skillsoft offers many content solutions that are designed to meet the growing challenges faced by organisations today. Effective learning programmes and outstanding support are just some of the reasons more and more companies are building their corporate training programmes around our flexible learning solutions.




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Skillsoft is the global leader in eLearning with a long history of innovation. We train more professionals than any other company in the world and are trusted by the world's leading organisations, including over 50% of the Fortune 500.

We currently serve over 6,700 customers and more than 45,000,000 learners worldwide and provide continuing, hands-on support to assist them in maximising their ongoing success.

Skillsoft has grown rapidly, with 2,500 employees across multiple locations in North America, EMEA and APAC. For more information, visit [www.skillssoft.com](https://www.skillssoft.com).