



Make training messages live and breathe

WE ALL know that taking people away from the phones can hit service levels – so it's vital that training has impact and brings value to the business. Here are some tips to make sure your training messages remain and translate into a change of behaviour which brings personal and business benefits.

Market training effectively Make sure people understand the reasons behind the training. Wrapping a marketing campaign around training can really help with the retention of the messages if they are followed up effectively afterwards.

Reynolds Catering Supplies, a family business which has grown to become one of the UK's leading independent distributors of fresh produce, needed a programme for its growing B2B inbound sales and customer services teams. We developed for Reynolds a programme called "Let's Get Fresh" to ensure the messages were highly memorable while sound skills practice training enabled the development of key customer facing skills.

Darren Maloney, customer services manager, said: "It was important to us that we undertook training that was relevant for our people and our business, and that it was delivered in a way which people would enjoy and benefit from."

And Verne Wooden, call centre manager, said: "...Let's Get Fresh has a fun participative approach, which has brought a consistency and a professional focus to both departments."

Include the bigger picture Win peoples'

People learn by doing and good skills training has to include well timed practice, which includes the opportunity for meaningful discussion and feedback. Telephone coaching equipment, such as Phonecoach products, is invaluable in practice or in coaching live calls. While people may enter the training room dreading the thought of role-play, this is where learning accelerates. It's because people are making their own sense of the theory and its relevance to their role. To get the best from role play:

- Make it realistic as possible
- Introduce the first practice carefully. Take time to explain how the equipment will be used. Focusing people on how the equipment works shifts their nerves from the exercise to more practical things
- Explain the importance of the preparation, do and review cycle in learning and how preparing will give them a better outcome
- Get them to focus on what they personally want to concentrate on and use that in the feedback discussions
- Ensure there is a clear process for giving feedback, which gets everyone to acknowledge what people do well. Skills practice should be about affirming and building confidence as well as learning skills and approaches that will help participants improve

Support the learning with coaching It's the practice that builds the skill and if the coaching teams and the training messages are aligned, then there is a real change in the behaviours which can bring about business success. A delegate on a recent programme was explaining how he was building skill in archery. To hit the target, every time, he explained it's important to learn what works, which when you're learning isn't necessarily what feels right. Having someone evaluate your approach with you can really elevate hitting the target.

Develop clear best practice Make sure all your people have a clear understanding of

the approaches, call structures, practices, skills and knowledge which will deliver the focus that the business requires. As business needs change, your approach will need to flex. Does your best practice reflect the conversations that your people need to have with your customers to deliver your marketing strategies? Dialogue development workshops with representatives from agents, coaches, managers and marketers can develop clear best practice using call maps, which can then be trained into your teams.

Reinforce, reinforce, reinforce Make sure training sessions include learning reviews and action plans. Review those one-to-one when people are back on the floor, either with team leaders, coaches, peer-to-peer coaches or buddies. Repeat the messages with emails, posters, competitions and games. Bite-sized sessions run in team meetings or when the time is right can build momentum and really embed the learning

Gain, retain, grow This is a great model for developing a customer base, and it equally applies to attracting and retaining the right people within a business. It's also a good way to consider training. What insights, practices and behaviours must your people gain in order to be effective?

What mechanisms will you have in place to remind, reinforce and enable people to retain their learning? How will you enable people to grow their skills and career through well chosen and relevant training as part of their individual development plan?

And, finally, remember a training course is the beginning not the end.

Diane Banister, MD, Intelligent Dialogue

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