

10 Tips to Better Crew Training

You know that training is vital for the safety and productivity of your crew. Obviously, you instruct your staff about what tasks to do and train them on how to do them. You may pop in a training video occasionally on a rainy day. But, have you developed a formalized crew training program that will improve the effectiveness, efficiency and morale of your staff? If you do not have a program in place, consider these techniques to get the most out of your training time.

- 1. Develop a cross training plan** – within your team and cross departmentally. Among life's inevitabilities are employee absences, and you have to plan for them. If your staffers are cross-trained, you can quickly plug critical gaps without calling in temporary workers, running up overtime costs, or filling in for the absent worker yourself. Cross training of your crew outside of your team has many benefits, too. It exposes your staff to the responsibilities of other departments, which creates a better understanding and appreciation for that department's efforts. The end result is a lessening of "competitiveness", an increase in camaraderie, an opportunity to share staff during vacations and illnesses, and a focus on achieving the facilities' goals. Your employee retention will increase due to the satisfaction of your crew learning of new tasks. This also can create new job opportunities within your organization.
- 2. Consider developing a regular training schedule.** Institutionalize a regular time for formalized training, i.e., the 3rd Monday of every month at 8 a.m. Putting it on the schedule and publicizing it helps you and your team to commit to it.
- 3. Seize the moment.** Training is very effective when it occurs in quick response to a need. So even though you are elbow deep in something else, and you have formal training slotted for a different timeframe, you should make every effort to satisfy an immediate need for information.
- 4. Involve your crew in planning.** People gravitate to what they like and are more engaged if they are involved. Rather than selecting the training topics, ask your crew what they need and what they *want* to learn. If you have a large crew, consider appointing a small subgroup to bring forward ideas.
- 5. Involve your crew in teaching.** Consider having a different crew member teach a training session each time. It is a fact that peer-taught training is a successful method that helps the trainees to more quickly grasp concepts and apply the learning to their jobs. This is also an excellent professional development exercise for the trainer.
- 6. Use training time for non-technical improvement.** It's a simple fact that employees fail in their jobs because of an inability to develop a trusting relationship with you and others. Building good relationships is a direct result of being able to communicate well. Consider bringing in a speaker from a local community college, the Dale Carnegie chapter or a trainer from a large corporation in your area, to present techniques to your group about how to strengthen their communications skills. Other good topics to consider are improving your writing skills, improving your presentation skills, stress management, the importance of good ethics, etc.
- 7. Create a better work environment through diversity.** Meeting your facilities expectations demands that you incorporate strategies to understand other cultures.

Consider hosting brown bag lunches (provide lunch) and have discussion about the various cultures represented on your staff and by your constituencies. Do you have anyone on your crew who is Hispanic? Consider having lunchtime training on learning basic Spanish, taught by these crew members.

8. **Use demonstration techniques.** When training your crew on a new technique, product or piece of equipment follow this process: *
 - Begin the process by having the trainees observe, from alongside, the trainer as the trainer actually performs the job.
 - Show the workers how to perform the task and explain the key elements. Be sure to explain why this task must be done, when it is done, why it is important that it be done correctly and the impact if it is not done correctly.
 - Allow the workers a second opportunity to watch the trainer to perform the task. The first time through, the trainer was probably not performing the task at the same rate of speed as normal because conversation is interspersed with the demonstration. This second time through, the workers are simply watching so that the trainer can perform the task at "production speed."
 - Allow the workers to perform simple elements of the task. In this phase of the instruction, the trainer and trainees are performing the task together with the trainee performing at least some the task and the trainer coaching as necessary.
 - Allow worker to perform the entire task with coaching as necessary from the trainer. Ideally, this is a one-try operation.
 - Observe the workers performing the entire task without supervision. For each task, this is the "final test." When each worker can perform the task without supervision, he or she is considered trained.
 - Allow workers to perform task without continued supervision. At this point the trainee's training for that particular task has been completed.

9. **Use your equipment and product suppliers for industry insights.** Of course this group provides a logical, ready-made cadre of trainers for your staff on products and equipment. But, these sales and technical representatives also have a wealth of industry insight. They visit many athletic facilities and see many different aspects of the industry. Invite them to provide an "Industry Insights" session, which should create a lot of discussion.

10. **Leverage local chapter and STMA annual conference education.** Everyone on your staff will likely not be able attend every educational session offered by your local chapter or the STMA national conference. Hold a brown bag (provide lunch) session and have each person who was able to attend give a short synopsis of what they learned at the external educational event.

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