

CLASS ACT

When an employee expresses sentiments such as “This is a whitewash to corporate headquarters” in relation to training then there’s trouble brewing.

That’s a comment I heard recently from an employee who felt he was participating in a corporate-wide training that had ‘no relevance to my job.’ He works in an operations capacity within his company.

There are many ways to train employees and to succeed in maintaining the corporate structural policies which lend themselves to better and safer performance by individual employees which will ultimately be beneficial to all concerned.

There is a certain amount of psychology attached to adult learning, whether mandated by corporate headquarters or at local level.

The main keys to successfully completing, acceptance and implementation of training in the workplace is the competence and structural methodologies of the trainers; whether in-house or outsourced.

The first element is to ensure your trainers are qualified in their methods of training. You should obtain fully documented verification of training, qualifications and history. Verification of these aspects should only be by means of sighting of original documents and, where possible, by contact with the issuing authority of the documents. You should also check if your trainers, particularly outsourced trainers, hold ISO accreditation and as members are regularly audited for full compliance. Disclosure of these aspects is a competent and professional avenue to follow.

If you are implementing a cultural change within your organization; then a substantial degree of preparedness for employee skepticism, cynicism, venting of frustrations and non-compliance or half-hearted compliance are areas that must be fully covered by the trainers before beginning a program. The syndrome of “this is a whitewash to corporate headquarters” and the training has ‘no relevance to my job’ have a nasty and coercive habit of filtering up the scale of employee monitoring.

Management acceptance and observance of the training will need to have obvious, apparent and transparently favorable reception and concurrence. There cannot lurk anywhere in the work environment double standards in regard to the operation of the new policies or structure.

Management must be seen to have received the same procedural training and methodology as other employees. The training message must reflect the actual core values of the company as expressed from corporate headquarters and must be communicated from headquarters through the chain of command and expressed by the entire management structure in a fulsome way so that the communication of no other

outside barrier such as time pressure, unclear procedures/methodologies or barriers are allowed to be put in place before the training can take effect at every level.

A level of indifference should not be tolerated or allowed to fester within any branch or division of the workforce. An in-depth and corporate-wide communications structure is essential to communicate the plan to all levels of the workforce. Without a proper communications plan in place – specifically couched and written to facilitate such new policies – then addressing the operational realities of any new policy will begin with barriers that may never be overcome.

To achieve the level of compliance the company will also need a clear system of support and performance scale to enable employees to have some method of self-adjudication and evaluation in relation to their individual and team competence and compliance.

From my own experience in these matters, one major mistake managers tend to make, particularly when a new policy or structural change is introduced, is the tendency of managers to micro-manage the entire process. Micro-management is frequently a self-inflicted wound; however more and more corporations are demanding such detailed paper chasing that often micro-management is the only option.

In most cases adults should be treated as capable and reliable. Of course, there are always the few intellectual paupers who will link themselves to making nuisance queries about the format and manageability of a program. There is also the few who will to an extent need to be coerced into acceptance; however, by and large if the new policy or program is introduced and structured in such a way that is readily understood then problems should be kept to a minimum.

The success of a new program or policy will depend on the amount of time expended on planning and ensuring that the content value of the program; and subsequent training, is believable to a wide and diverse audience.

If your new program or policy involves redundancies – and if those redundancies involve substantial numbers of people; you must ensure that the corporate entity recognizes and makes provision for the people who will be laid off. Redundancies make for fearful bedfellows and fearful bedfellows can make or break the success or failure of the policy. You should aim at being a class act.

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