

SuperSize Your Talent (at Minimal Expense)

Staff training and development enables employees to excel in their work and reach beyond their limits, for the benefit of the organization. Training renders staff confident and empowered. Empowered staff typically perform at their best and gain great satisfaction as a result, and satisfied, happy staff tend to stay longer.

Below are 5 high-impact, low-cost training suggestions, to help foster a working environment of learning, growth and employee satisfaction.

1) Lunch 'n' Learn

Quick learning sessions. More relaxed and less structured than traditional training, lunch 'n' learn sessions can include professional development and life skills. They can be brief and allow staff to return to their work without significant interruption. Oh, and once in awhile, you may want to spring for pizza.

2) Embrace Technology

It's as easy as turning on your computer. Whether it's an e-training course or a webinar, online training can be delivered quickly and efficiently to large numbers of people – often at a relatively low cost.

3) D.I.Y.

Do it yourself! Take advantage of the talent you have within your organization (or collaborate with other organizations with similar needs) to put together employee-led sessions. Here are a few ideas:

- **Peer-to-Peer:** Set up a program where staff members share their expertise with others. There is a huge benefit in providing staff an orientation of the work and priorities of others.
- **A day in the life:** Pair up staff who usually don't work together and have them interview each other. Then have each participant introduce their co-worker and talk about the successes and struggles he/she has with their job. You'll be fostering teamwork and improving employee engagement.
- **"To teach is to learn twice"**
(Joseph Houbert, Pensées, 1842):
When staff members attend a course, ask them to prepare a "teach-back" to share key ideas with their colleagues. There's no better way to learn than to teach it to someone else – and the whole team will benefit from new information.

4) Dress Rehearsals

Presentations are performances, and the best performers rehearse! Hold dress rehearsals for major gift calls (or any upcoming presentation). Rehearse delivering the case for support, fielding donor's questions and making the ask. Team members can critique and advise on strong points and needed revisions (and throw popcorn and cheer). The in-house approach provides a fun, safe environment to enhance your staff's presentation skills.

5) Teach them to Fish

"Give a man a fish and you'll feed him for a day, Teach him to fish and you'll feed him for a lifetime." You know the saying...teach your staff to "fish" for training on their own by encouraging them to seek out learning opportunities. Why not try:

- **An in-house library.** Start a library with a handful of nonprofit sector classics and add innovative authors/luminaries from different industries whose thinking might translate well to your organization. Encourage staff to borrow books and bring in sector-relevant books of their own to share.
- **Take 5.** Let staff spend one afternoon a month exploring no-cost training opportunities on their own. Freeing up even a few hours for creative thinking will reinvigorate your staff and inevitably lead to innovation.

By fostering an environment that promotes education, skills and learning, your staff will continue on the same path for a lifetime – which creates a win-win for your organization, and all those you serve.

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