

What is the future of workplace training?

It is a well-known fact that during tough economic times the training budget is usually the first to go. However, research reveals that investment in workplace training is growing, albeit slowly.

Training surveys performed in 2012 have indicated that training spend increased by 5% globally. We predict that spending on training will continue to increase at a similar rate during 2013.

Business leaders are realising that it is not sustainable to slash training budgets or even put training on hold. Cost saving remains a priority for companies today and training is being viewed as an investment rather than an expense. Training current staff to do more or different jobs will be more cost-effective than hiring externally to fill open positions.

Pointers for HR practitioners

I advise training managers to look for courses that add real value and that build on their employees' existing skills sets. This may seem like an obvious and simple practice, but choosing from masses of training providers has proven to be extremely challenging. There are many stories of unscrupulous providers duping companies out of their money or providing sub-standard training.

I urge HR professionals to research training companies thoroughly before embarking on training programmes. One way of ensuring credibility is by requesting references, particularly about the facilitator's subject matter expertise and industry experience.

At the same time, business should be prepared to spend on quality training and make sure that every single investment nets a positive return.

Organisations are facing more employee restlessness and there is a growing trend of people moving to companies that are willing to spend a significant amount on training and development, so this is an important consideration when retaining high-performance employees and attracting new talent.

You need to streamline your training initiatives and recognise that employees know that training and development is important to their career development. A good training manager must also ensure a healthy mix of classroom or public courses supplemented by online training courses.

Trainer trends to watch

The use of mobile devices as training tools is continuing to increase simply because of the accessibility of tablets and

mobile devices.

It makes sense in this modern era that there will be an upswing in online training; however it must be understood that that there is a large number of training topics that simply don't translate into online training courses. This means that there is no substitution for the actual classroom experience with the face-to-face interaction with a subject matter expert.

There will be a renewed demand for training courses that focus on building communication skills, creative thinking and decision making, as well as people management skills - all of which are needed to improve productivity and boost the bottom line.

Due to budgetary constraints in the past many companies simply cut these out and focused purely on targeted training topics. Now there is a growing demand for basic skills.

What we have seen is that companies from the industrial sector are not only investing with us in technical training for their technical professionals and engineers, but are also spending money on making their technical professionals more productive and efficient by sending them on soft skills training, including communication skills, technical report writing, presentation skills and financial decision-making.

Lessons for learners

We do think that people should take responsibility for their personal learning and development and take hold of any available opportunities.

Training in languages and basic skills is a good place to start. A very popular training course is our Business English course, which is a three-day training course that is focused on both the written and verbal aspects of communicating when English is your second language.

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