

## WORKPLACE MATTERS

# Varied approaches to employee training available to companies

The rapid pace of change and technology in today's workplace puts enormous pressure on businesses to continually upgrade the skills of their employees to stay competitive.



Robin Onaclea

Businesses cite a variety of challenges in providing training to their work force:

- ◆ Justifying the expense can be hard, especially during lean times.
- ◆ Maintaining productivity while training can be difficult.
- ◆ Finding training that is

easily accessible and customized to specific needs can be problematic.

Local businesses have used a variety of tools and strategies to overcome these obstacles and address their training needs.

## In-house training

Many companies develop their own internal training programs that are either administered by human-resource personnel or conducted by trained employees within the company.

Lanz Cabinets in Eugene has developed an in-house, on-the-job training system that certifies new employees in different skill areas. They also have a series of self-produced DVDs that instruct employees in the use of the most common equipment.

Through this training effort, Lanz has seen a significant decrease in the amount of time before new hires become productive.

## E-learning

Some local businesses solve scheduling difficulties by using on-demand training via the Internet or an in-house computer system.

SkillSoft ([www.skillsoft.com](http://www.skillsoft.com)) provides a variety of training packages in business and information technology topics.

Capstone Technology ([www.capstonetechnology.com](http://www.capstonetechnology.com)) provides training packages for industrial settings and uses 3-D interactive graphics produced with video-game technology.

Capstone has developed customized training programs for the Lane County RV Consortium, including how to use a table saw. The training orients employees to the machine's fea-

tures and safety concerns and allows them to make virtual cuts with the saw through the computer. This training reduced the amount of time supervisors spend on hands-on training.

## Learning management systems

Many computer-based training vendors offer computerized learning management systems that organize computer-based training materials and track training for employees. Supervisors can develop individualized training programs for their employees and track progress on the system.

Ideal systems are scalable and allow for a business to house not only off-the-shelf training, but to upload customized and internally developed training.

Mike Warner, human resource manager at Marathon Coach, recently began using a learning management system. He says it's been an extremely valuable tool for Marathon to organize and document training for employees at all levels and in all areas. Warner also appreciates the tickler feature that reminds him when any employee needs to renew a license or certificate.

## Customized training

Companies can benefit by working with local community colleges or universities that may be able to offer training customized for them.

Lane Community College offers training in a flexible format that can be delivered at the worksite or in a traditional classroom setting.

Recent local trainings include English as a second language classes, Excel training and Frontline leadership training.

LCC's Business Development Center can be reached at (541) 463-5255.

Invitrogen in Eugene has teamed up with the University of Oregon Lundquist College of Business to develop and provide a customized executive seminar on marketing for its scientific staff.

The seminar provides participants with practical tools they can use to improve sales performance.

The Lundquist College of Business can be reached at (541) 346-3303. There are also many local private training consultants who can provide customized training services.

## Business consortia

A cost-effective means of providing training is to share expenses with other companies that have similar training needs. Several local business associations and consortia provide training using this model.

For example, the Emerald Valley High Performance Enterprise Consortium has a dozen local companies that collectively send employees to local training in high performance manufacturing. Dues collected from members subsidize the training. This model works particularly well for small businesses with limited training budgets.

Businesses can also share the costs of bringing training vendors to the area. This approach avoids the expenses associated with travel and reduces the time employees are out of the workplace, thus reducing lost productivity.

## Evaluating your training

Once a training program has been implemented, it is important that businesses evaluate the effectiveness of the training:

- ◆ Use evaluation forms.
- ◆ Interview trainees.
- ◆ Test employees on the material.
- ◆ Measure changes in production and quality of work after the training.

The Internet offers many tools to help calculate the return on investment for your training initiatives. One of the more comprehensive sites can be found at [www.learnativity.com/roi-learning.html](http://www.learnativity.com/roi-learning.html).

*If you have questions about training your work force, contact Robin Onaclea, the business services coordinator at Lane Workforce Partnership, at [robino@laneworkforce.org](mailto:robino@laneworkforce.org) or (541) 682-7224.*