

The Three Most Common Training Mistakes (You're probably making one of them now!)

By Bob 'Idea Man' Hooey

As an owner, manager or team leader, you frequently make decisions to engage or contract on programs and policies that will either help or hinder your team in reaching their goals.

Unfortunately, training dollars will *ultimately* be wasted when leaders make some of the following mistakes.

You can avoid making training mistakes by thinking about a few ideas, and side stepping some mistakes that, *for others*, have minimized returns on their training dollars.

- **Failing to fully assess team needs.** Perhaps you are teaching your team skills they already have? Team members don't need training 'just for the sake of training.' I've heard managers say, "*Even if they know this stuff - a refresher won't hurt them?*"

Sometimes that is true (I've been asked back to reinforce a program or to provide add-on sessions); but if not handled correctly, it can be counter productive or de-motivating.

Here's a suggestion: before you launch any training program, conduct a needs assessment with your team. Work to establish a comprehensive list of current team members' skills.

This way you may discover what they already know, and what they need (and hopefully want) to learn. Then, as you provide training it will send a positive message that you value their contributions and are dedicated to helping them increase and hone their skills.

Decide how to design your programs to incorporate follow up reinforcement to enhance their effectiveness. Make that a vital part of your program, but design it to ensure it is productive reinforcement.

- **Thinking (*wishfully*) that training sessions will eliminate conflict.** Managers sometimes think that training, especially training that focuses on team or relationship building, will help eliminate conflict on the job.

Some programs over emphasize 'teamwork' at the expense of **team-effectiveness**. All team efforts need to be focused as well as task and relationship oriented.

When sessions focus too much on relationship building vs. team-effectiveness, they lose impact and may often become counter productive.

Here's a suggestion: work to ensure everyone on your team knows that '*constructive*' conflict is an important part of the team process. Without some conflict and honest difference of opinion, you get mediocrity.

As someone once told me, "*The opposite of conflict is apathy, not peace and harmony.*"

The secret is in not taking conflict as a personal issue or a negative result in the process.

Creative, constructive conflict can be a part of a positive process in making sure your team makes the best choice and fully explores all the options and potential pitfalls.

- **Thinking of training as a program vs. a process.**

One of the challenges in training is the expectation that a half-day, full day or even a few days of training can *change years of habit*.

Research shows that shorter sessions spread over a longer time result in better retention and long-range effectiveness. Short and often rather than a one time massive attack seems to work.

Here's a suggestion: for your training to be effective, insights and ideas gained must be quickly translated into action (Ideas At Work) - actions that are reinforced by the leaders on your team.

Real development is never *fully* completed, as is the true *essence of education*.

In my live sessions, I *challenge my audience members* to make a commitment to act on what they learn, and to schedule those actions.

I hope these suggestions will help you as you search out the most effective training programs for your team. I'd be happy to share some other thoughts with you if you have any other questions or queries. As well, I would be happy to explore how I might be of service in on-site training for you and your team.

How about other ideas or past mistakes that can be shared as lessons learned? I'd be happy to hear your experiences in this area. Drop me a note at:

<mailto:bob@ideaman.net>

© Copyright 2009 Bob 'Idea Man' Hooley <http://www.ideaman.net> All rights in all media reserved.

Articles may be copied or used for **non-profit** purposes, without the consent of the author, as long as the article, contact information and by-line are reprinted intact... the following being included: "© Copyright 2009 Bob 'Idea Man' Hooley <http://www.ideaman.net> All rights in all media reserved. Used with the permission of the author."

About the author:

Bob 'Idea Man' Hooley is a sought after productivity strategist, creativity catalyst and idea farmer), who regularly writes for North American consumer, association and trade journals, on-line magazines and company intranets. He is the author of ten success books, a mini-book series, four success systems and an e-book series. Bob was the 48th person in the history of Toastmasters International to earn their coveted professional level Accredited Speaker designation. Bob is a motivational, business and association keynote conference speaker and executive leadership trainer and coach. He is a professional member of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers and the International Federation for Professional Speakers. **Visit his website for additional leadership, business and career development articles like this one:** <http://www.ebusinesssuccess.biz>