

## Maximizing Your Training Investment

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Consider the companies, the programs, and teams that consistently win. They are always training. When people don't train or continually educate themselves, skills dull, routine sets in, and bad habits drive less than desired results. A commitment to training and learning is one key attribute that separates the good from the great.

All organizations understand the value of training but today leaders must ensure that training programs are strategic and effective to maximize the investment dollars. To get the best training ROI, ArchPoint Consulting has had great success with a multi-phased approach:

1. **Assessment:** Our team starts with an assessment of the current training programs, identifies the competencies that should exist in the organization based on the organization's strategy and business plan, and completes a skill gap assessment.
2. **The Basics:** The next step is to build a comprehensive training blueprint for the organization based on the gap analysis that is competency-based and blends multiple approaches to training including formal classroom, self study, web-based and on-the-job. In this preliminary training, we often focus on "Selling 101" and emphasize the very basic skill sets of selling, to give the sales people tools to drive their effectiveness. These are the capabilities that are often forgotten, but have great value, including listening, objection handling, communication skills, etc.
3. **Strategic Selling:** In this round of training, we first identify then focus on strategic customers. Our emphasis is on moving from transactional selling to strategic selling, going beyond the entry point of contact, identifying key decision makers, and influencing the business across multiple functions.
4. **Joint Business Planning:** In this final phase, we identify joint business opportunities with strategic customers. Our model and process provides the specific tools to align strategies and tactics with your most important customers to create a long-term platform for mutually profitable growth.

The transfer and improvement of skills and competencies for ongoing and sustained results is the goal. In order to ensure sustainable success, there are several critical components to consider.

- **Frequency/Variety** – No matter how great the training program or the facilitator, no one can expect to get in front of someone once, tell them something, and hope that they apply it out of the gate. The information must be in relatively small doses, and then the topics need to be re-visited frequently and in different ways – webinars, newsletters, "work withs" in the field, – building on them each time. Winning teams are constantly training and redundancy is how they get better.
- **Relevancy** – For the information to stick, the skill set must be relevant the day the person gets back to the office; otherwise its effectiveness diminishes every day. Effective training is based on a foundation of what people do today so that we can affect

new behaviors going forward. The market, customer, competition, and consumer are always changing so a core foundation is required to adapt and remain relevant.

- **Small doses** – New tools/skills have to be doled out carefully. It is a false expectation that with one training session everything will instantly change. The most “seasoned” people have a way of doing things – right or wrong, that’s how they do it. Human nature resists change so the information needs to be in incremental bits. “Old dogs” can be taught new tricks — they need to understand that they can apply the new skills to what they currently do, as opposed to an expectation that the fundamentals of what/how they do their job is going to change overnight.
- **Hands-on** – As adults, we learn better through situational or experiential learning. Training needs to incorporate case studies and workshops and, again, content needs to be relevant (to what we are doing today, not what someone might have done 5 years ago).
- **Ongoing Assessment** – This critical process must occur as it reinforces for all participants how important it is to apply the training. Avoid the light switch syndrome (Off/On). Don’t invest in three days of training then never mention it again. Leaders must be prepared to not only assess but also to model the behavior. If you expect it then be prepared to inspect it.

If you want to win in this highly competitive and volatile marketplace, effective and ongoing training tied to key strategies and business plans is essential. If you don’t start now then don’t have high expectations that results will change.

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