

Personnel Management: Training and Employee Development

By [Mark Horne](#)

Many years ago, I had an employee on the full service island of my station put anti-freeze into the windshield washer tank. As I remember the paint job for the damage cost me over \$500.00. After chewing out the “stupid employee”, I had an opportunity to reflect on his action. I concluded that you shouldn’t blame them unless you train them. The reality is that Vulcan mind melts don’t get the job done.

What are the positive results of training employees?

- Better customer service
- Higher sales and profits
- Fewer job mistakes that cost the company money
- Better store controls, checking in vendors for example
- Fewer work related injuries
- Better compliance with laws (particularly, alcohol and tobacco)
- Reduced turnover
- Consistent implementation of company systems, policies and procedures
- More accurate paperwork that saves the company time and money

Having trained employees is critical to our business success. I would suggest that you develop in-house training programs based on the following criteria.

Rather than list the topics that need to be trained, let’s discuss a process to develop an in-house training program.

1. Training must be formal and inclusive. Don’t simply put one cashier with another for a few days and expect the employee to be trained. Too many things will be missed.
 - a. Develop or acquire a training checklist from NACS or other sources and be sure your training covers all of the relevant items on the list
 - b. Develop a methodology to deliver the training that includes training methods, testing, tracking, and documenting.
 - c. Prioritize training content to focus on **must know** and **need to know** training content.
 - d. Make sure the training is both interactive and fun. Too many training programs are boring. Be sure there are a lot of fill-in-the blanks, questions to answer, questions that require company procedures manuals be used as reference and hands on exercises. Avoid having the training heavy lecture. Employees should actively participate in approximately 75%-80% of the training. If you utilize video, be sure the employees have to answer questions during or after the video. For example, if you are using a vendor check in video, scramble the order of check-in tasks and have employees in groups put them into the proper order.
2. Consider training an ongoing process. Successful companies recognize that having an ongoing training program builds skills and reduces turnover. In addition, when you have openings for managers and assistant managers, having an ongoing training program allows you to select people from within the company who already have an understanding of your mission, vision, values, systems, processes and procedures.

3. Link your incentives to training and post training measurable improvements. This gives employees, not only a positive reason to attend, but to learn and even more importantly, apply what they learned.
4. Compare your training with that of best-in-class competitors. Emulation of successful programs is good business.
5. Don't become complacent with your training. It is important to continually update your training as operational practices change.

The following is a brief list of topics that should be the basis of your training program.

- Company rules, policies and procedures
- Diversity (customers and fellow employees)
- Product knowledge
- Alcohol and Tobacco regulations (We Card, etc.)
- Safety (includes Robbery Deterrence)
- Vendor check-in procedures
- ADA employee responsibilities (in the store and on the island)
- Customer service (including suggestive selling, handling difficult customers, etc.)
- Image and appearance (includes store maintenance and merchandising responsibilities)
- Emergency procedures (environmental)
- Operation of store equipment

Keep in mind that trained employees are a competitive advantage that should not be ignored when developing marketing plans and strategies to grow your business. Trained employees do make a difference.

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