

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Service Training, Pt. II

By Eva Kaplan-Leiserson

Thanks to all of you who wrote in with your thoughts on improving customer service  "Service Train-ing," NYCU (May T+D).

Here's a sampling of the great suggestions I received.

Train the workers beyond service skills. The solution isn't just better customer service training, says Monica Starke, psychotherapist and training consultant. Employers must

go beyond job skills to provide workers with training on such self-management topics as handling stress, avoiding burnout, managing conflict, and even parenting. Helping employees with those skills that are so important to work-life balance, Starke says, will make them feel more valued and improve the way they interact with customers or clients.

Train the managers to help workers reach their goals. Tonny Harris, certified trainer, and Bryan Weller, staff development coordinator, turn the spotlight on the managers. It's their responsibility, say Harris and Weller, to talk to workers and discover what their goals are. Then, managers must help design training and advancement opportunities so that employees can move to jobs

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they *do* care about. But if you go this route, beware, says Weller. You'll discover how much workers really want (or don't want) a positive solution. Harris adds that managers also have to be trained on how to respond to workers who just don't care and hold those people accountable.

Take a three-pronged approach. Cynthia Schoepfel, organizational consultant, suggests these steps:

- Make sure you're hiring the right person for the job. Be clear about the competencies, skills, and abilities your candidate should have, and evaluate past behavior in the interview.
- Provide learning opportunities throughout employment. Offer a comprehensive orientation program, use mentors or buddies, deliver just-in-time training, and evaluate learning and skills application.
- Manage employees for successful performance. The difference between the two Metro workers, Schoepfel says, may have been their management coaching or even the way their manager greeted them that morning.

It's the individual one-on-one interactions that are critical for management success.

Give it to them straight. Bob Snyder, now operations systems training specialist with H&R Block, spent almost 22 years in the U.S. Air Force—retiring as superintendent of operations training. In his military duty, Snyder learned the importance of advising an airman, marine, soldier, or sailor if he or she wasn't suited for a particular job. In the civilian world, he says, managers hesitate to have such heart-to-heart talks.

Perhaps there are legal concerns, says Snyder, but don't we also have a duty to our employees to help them succeed? "How did we get to the point in our society," he asks, "where the most important thing, even to the point of dishonesty, is to avoid saying something that might hurt someone's feelings?"

We don't all have to agree on one solution to improve customer service. Try one of the suggestions at your company; if it doesn't work, try another!

Global 360

Education Gaps

Reducing disparities in education levels may be more important to boosting poor countries' *economic growth* than narrowing the income gap between the rich and the poor. So says a new study that analyzed 30 years of data from 108 countries. Research demonstrated: Higher education that's limited to a small percentage of the population was associated with slower per capita income growth than when education was dispersed more evenly. South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa demonstrated the most unequal distribution of education, although most countries are slowly moving towards rectifying the disparity.

The United States is struggling with an education gap as well: A study of the *literacy rates* of 17 industrialized nations found the U.S. gap between highly and poorly educated adults to be the greatest. One factor in the rating: a large immigrant workforce that's responsible for more than 40 percent of labor-force growth in the United States since 1990.

More/ www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/02_17/c3780034.htm (scroll down the page) and www.ets.org/research/pic/twinchall.pdf

More on the links between great customer service, training, and business success

www.fastcompany.com/feature/02/fred.html

SurveySays

Best-practice companies spend more money on training. That's the finding of a U.K. study conducted by consulting firm Birkby Lancaster. Companies that won the U.K. Excellence awards were asked what percentage of pay they allocated for employee training and development. Across industries, the results were consistent: Best-practice companies spent almost 3 percent of salary, twice the U.K. average.

Source/trainingzone.co.uk

E-News

Blurry, jerky streaming video isn't anyone's favorite way to learn. But students at one educational institution had a special need for high-quality video transmissions. Gallaudet University, the world's only liberal arts university for people with hearing impairments, needed e-learning video technology that was crystal clear and enabled students, instructors, and others to read hand signs and finger-spelling accurately.

Enter VBrick Systems, a company that offers DVD-quality television over digital IP networks. The matchmaker was the Internet2 consortium, a group to which both VBrick and Gallaudet belong. I2 joins educational institutions, corporations, and government agencies to develop the next-generation Internet.

After an application process, VBrick selected Gallaudet to receive a long-term loan of hardware and software. The technology will be used on the Internet2 network to enable video-conferencing and video on demand, including broadcasts of sign language training, remote interpreting, and special events.

VBrick is also providing hardware and software that can be lent part-time to the pool of I2 institutions.

More/info@vbrick.com

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Policy News

A snapshot of U.S. federal legislation and policy affecting workforce development and the HRD profession.

House Introduces Human Capital Bill

The Good People, Good Government Act (HR 4580) was introduced by Representative Connie A. Morella (R-MD) on April 24, to reform federal employee career development and benefits. The bill would require each agency to appoint or designate a chief human capital officer to assist in selecting, developing, and managing a high-quality, productive workforce. The bill would also establish a Chief Human Capital Officer Council and require appointment of a recruitment officer. Similar legislation (S 1603) was introduced in the Senate by Senator George Voinovich (R-OH) in October 2001.

Welfare Reform Bill Passes House

Rep. Deborah Pryce (R-OH) introduced the *Personal Responsibility, Work and Family Promotion Act of 2002* (HR 4737) on May 15. The bill passed the U.S. House on May 16, and was sent to the U.S. Senate. The legislation would reauthorize and improve grants to states for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Access to quality child care would improve, and the workweek would be increased from 30 to 40 hours. States would also be required to raise the proportion of welfare recipients who are working or in job training to 70 percent by 2007.

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- www.winningworkplaces.org a not-for-profit organization helping small to midsize companies create great workplaces
- www.worldwidelearn.com a virtual Yellow Pages of e-learning courses, programs, and certificates
- www.yourdictionary.com/languages.html and www.yourdictionary.com/specialty.html dictionaries and glossaries for almost every language and specialty field you can imagine