

Show This To Your CEO

A top executive who supports training in word and deed is a rare and valuable combination. William Weisz, vice chairman and chief operating officer of Motorola, Inc., is an unabashed champion of training. Many believe that high-level support, such as Weisz's, is essential to the success of training in any company.

TDJ: How does training contribute to Motorola's business goals?

Weisz: Motorola has a long history of training its employees so that the company is equipped to meet its goals. Training contributes to our goals in many ways—from programs that provide functional skills to those that teach senior managers about the issues, problems, and opportunities facing the corporation. Everything in this broad continuum of training is meant to convey the ability to go out and attack something. The result could be an activity, a new skill, or it could be an entire strategy. Some training produces new strategies. Other training backs that up with the skills needed to implement a strategy. For example, one of our long-standing goals is to have a participative management system, and we offer a whole series of courses to teach people to participate. Another example would be our approach to operating in an international environment. We've been doing business in the Asian Pacific for 25 years, but recently some of our executive seminars have focused on the problems and opportunities there and helped us improve activities and set new targets.

TDJ: How does top management show its support for training?

Weisz: The first is by our example. We participate. We go through training ourselves to set an example.

Second, the chief executive officer, Bob Galvin, and I serve on the advisory board for the Motorola Training and Education Center.

Third, the policy committee for the corporation determines the level of funding for training. We set a required minimum of 1.5 percent of payroll costs that must be put into training. It turned out that we spent a lot more than that but there was no one who could get by without doing at least that much.

Fourth, we audit the performance of our business organizations to see who is using training and how effective it is.

Fifth, the top executives at Motorola act as instructors. For example, Bob Galvin and I recently spent a day and half with the participants in the executive development institute conducting part of an awareness program. At the end of our monthly senior executive development programs, one of us attends the final session at which results of the training are discussed. We participate, we challenge, we question.

TDJ: What are Motorola's training priorities and how are they determined?

Weisz: From the bottom up, we ask what people think the training priorities should be in their areas. From the top down, we look at our strategies and at what we want to accomplish. For example, if a strategy is to use participative management, we look at what training will make that happen.

Our priorities right now concern global strategy, sensitivity to the marketplace, cycle time reduction, quality improvement, manufacturing technology, and a continuum of participative management. These priorities determine what kind of training to undertake. For example, in our strategy to be competitive globally, we offer courses in benchmarking and competitive intelligence gathering.

TDJ: How did training contribute to Motorola's successful adaptation to changing markets and changing technology?

Weisz: Training in the formulation of strategy has helped. So has training on activities in the Asian Pacific. For the past 15 years we have put a lot of emphasis on strategic thinking, so that each of our businesses will continue to look at itself in different ways. By continually asking where we are strong and where we are weak, we have moved in and out of different businesses and learned how to operate internationally. I won't say we wouldn't have done these things unless there had been training, but training increased our competence and efficiency to accomplish our goals and to do them faster and smarter.

TDJ: What advice would you give to your peers in other companies regarding training and development?

Weisz: You and the rest of your senior management must commit yourself personally to training. You must be a driving force for it.

You must be visibly involved, perhaps as a participant or an instructor, because people learn very quickly that what you are involved in is what is important.

You should be focused in your training, whether it's teaching people how to strategize or how to be better in manufacturing.

You should train your senior managers and not just those people down in the organization.

You should audit the results of training, not necessarily by looking at the numbers, but by going down into the organization yourself and asking people face-to-face what they got out of the training and if they are implementing it. Senior people should audit training results this way at random to validate that something is coming out of training.

You should recognize that training is a good communication vehicle in both directions. Top management can use it to reach specific groups brought together for training, and participants can use it to tell you what is really happening in the company.



Motorola chief operating officer, William Weisz. "Training pays off in the short term and the long term."