

Learning Campaigns

How to carry learning beyond the classroom

By Sven Laurik

Illustration by Christophe Hitz

Your training classes ended last week and received excellent evaluations. Performance tracking indicators are up. Your employees are energized.

But look a few months later and the picture isn't as rosy. Despite your efforts, performance has dropped close to pretraining levels and employee motivation has diminished as day-to-day priorities overwhelm participants.

So how do you make training stick? Though training professionals are adept

at designing programs to address immediate needs, we sometimes miss the big picture—how to effect and sustain long-term changes in learner behavior.

Trainers can improve the stickiness of their learning interventions by using an ongoing learning campaign. Similar to a product marketing campaign, a learning campaign is an ongoing effort to maintain awareness and sustain behaviors. The initial learning experience is preserved by keeping key

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messages in front of learners despite the competing demands of everyday work life.

These simple actions can incorporate a learning campaign into your training program.

Think like a marketer. Consider the marketing campaign of a new film. Marketers publicize through such cross-promotional avenues as previews, celebrity interviews, and perhaps a behind-the-scenes special on TV. The mixed-media messages result in a powerful synergy and increase public awareness, in turn boosting sales of all related products. Make friends with

Here's the plan

Consider how to take advantage of the few weeks after training is completed when learners' enthusiasm is at its peak, as well as several months later when their memories begin to fade.

First, establish your objectives. In addition to reinforcing specific technical abilities (for example, software skills), the campaign should also target affective behaviors, such as compassion.

Incorporate hooks to reinforce key messages easily at later dates. For example, brand an element of the learning campaign with an acronym—such as CARE, standing for “compassion, atten-

in the cafeteria to entertain and train during the lunch hour. And to make it fun, give prizes.

Employee newsletters can be delivered in paper or electronic form, each issue focusing on a specific subject matter. Through newsletters, you can address topics thoroughly and reinforce complex messages. Keep each issue short, and use high-impact designs and images.

Posters are a low-cost and flexible way to reinforce messages. Make sure the designs are compelling and the messages are presented in a clever and subtle manner. Change the posters frequently.

Video and audio programs can be delivered via the Internet or burned on CDs. Broadcast a training videotape as entertainment in public areas. Give learners CDs featuring humorous customer service interviews.

Focus groups are dynamic platforms to convey customer service messages. A moderated focus group featuring employees and customers can foster empathy. Or tape a focus-group session for use later.

Gadgets, gizmos, and toys imprinted with your learning message can help sustain the lesson. A simple customized hat or pen will work.

Regardless of your method, take a long-term approach to training objectives. Like a marketing campaign, your learning campaign may be the best way to ensure lasting results.

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Wage a mini-campaign. A “200 days since the last accident” sign provides a daily reinforcement for workplace safety for industrial workers. Organizations can use other media such as the company intranet to communicate mini-campaigns that reinforce behavioral messages.

Keep it subtle. During a recent visit to a company, I saw a tattered poster that read: “The Measure of Quality Is the Price of Non-Conformance.” I’m guessing few folks were motivated by that outdated cliché. Make your learning campaign messages intelligent, entertaining, subtle, and humorous when appropriate.

teness, resolution, and empathy.” Follow-up materials can use the CARE brand to remind employees of the company’s core values.

Mix it up

There are many options that can enable you to incorporate a media-rich learning campaign into your training development program:

Web and email commercials can be delivered on the company intranet and use Flash or GIF animations if your technology allows. Produce a series of commercials, each addressing a single behavior or attitude, and deliver one or two a week.

Contests and games can be distributed to employees using Web-based technologies. Or set up a *Jeopardy*-style game