



One on One

LEARNING MADE PERSONAL

6 Steps for Getting Company-Wide Buy-In for Your Employee Training Program



Introduction

Your budget is stretched thin, but there's a lot that needs to be done. Employees want more. The C-Suite is applying pressure for targets to be met. Managers are consistently expressing their concerns. There's a lot riding on you finding the best solution to address all these needs (and more) without breaking the bank.

Chief on the list is giving the staff the training they need so they can work well together, create a healthy work environment, and perform optimally. But then the issue goes back to the budget — how are you going to build an effective employee training program when money is tight?

This guide provides a 6-step process that will help you build out an employee training program that's supported at all levels — executive, managerial, and lower-level staff. This support will change the game and help make your employee training program ongoing, relevant, and impactful.



1. Get Alignment on the Needs That Should be Addressed

Your aim isn't to create an employee training program because you've either been tasked with the responsibility or it's touted as the in-thing to do in the HR space. The best results come from employee training programs that address specific needs within an organisation. Some of these needs are evident through observation, but a holistic perspective of what's needed only comes through getting the right people in the room.

Set up a meeting with all the managers in your organisation and ask them these questions:

- ✓ What's our biggest challenge as a team?
- ✓ What are the biggest time wasters for you each week?
- ✓ What are the issues impacting the team's ability to work together?
- ✓ What are the biggest blockers preventing us from performing optimally?
- ✓ Are there any team-specific challenges that we need to be aware of?

These questions will unearth a wide range of challenges within your organisation, as well as the department with the most challenges. The answers will also help with creating alignment around the challenges with greatest priority.

2. Plan Your Pilot Project

It's best not to start with a company-wide rollout of employee training. Start with a pilot project where you build employee training around a challenge faced within a specific department. Your pilot project plan should include:

- A goal
- Results of a skills gap analysis conducted with members of that team
- Employee incentives
- A plan for measuring the ROI

Let's say you've chosen the sales department. The Senior Sales Manager identified that one of the biggest challenges his team faces is getting to key decision makers in organizations. This leads to lengthy sales cycles and a lower rate of closed deals.

Your pilot project would begin with a meeting with the Senior Sales Manager. Use this meeting to build a relationship and get feedback on the skills he thinks the team is lacking. Also, discuss a measurable outcome he believes the sales team can achieve with the right training.

Use this meeting to develop a goal for the training program. Here's an example.

By the end of this training program, the sales team should have a better understanding of how to build B2B relationships effectively so that deals can be closed faster. This training will result in a 20% increase in revenue within a year.

Now that the goal is set, you assess the sales team to identify their skill gaps. This should be done in two ways:

- Give the team a survey so that you can get feedback on the skills each team member feels he or she lacks.
- Have each team member complete a skills gap analysis that focuses specifically on the skills required for B2B sales.

Combine these results with the feedback from the manager and you'll begin to see patterns in the skills that are lacking. Use these patterns to create a training program that addresses those skill gaps. Choose a combination of online training, in-person training, mentorship, and coaching. Include assessments that test knowledge and reinforce learning.

The next step of your plan outlines the incentives for the employees who're participating in this pilot. One option is to create a points system where employees are given points for completing specific milestones. Employees can be given rewards based on the number of points they accumulate.

Finally, your plan should include a clear process for documenting the results of your pilot and how it impacts the revenue goal. Have a clear plan for collecting and documenting qualitative and quantitative feedback before, during, and after the program. Work with the senior manager to track whether the training directly impacts the sales teams' performance and leads to the 20% increase in revenue.

3. Present Your Plan To the C-Suite

You have the buy-in of the senior manager who is participating in the pilot program. The next step is presenting your plan to the C-Suite so you can get the resources necessary to run the program. For this to work, you need a C-Suite member who is ready to champion the cause.

In the example above, the best C-Suite member to ask for support would be the Chief Revenue Officer since the sales team falls directly under this person's leadership. Present your plan to this person first, answer all the questions that arise, and ask for an opportunity to present the plan at the next exec meeting.

Here are some tips for making your presentation at the exec meeting impactful.

- Make it short and highly visual.
- Highlight the expected outcome, how you plan to get there, and the timeframe in which the result can be expected.
- Outline all the costs associated with the project. Some possible costs include:
 - A learning management system (LMS): Provide three options (lower-tier, middle-tier, and top-tier) and explain the benefits of each.
 - Hiring a learning and development specialist: It would help to have someone whose sole responsibility is to manage the project. This person could be hired on a one-year contract rather than as a full-time employee.
 - Staff incentives: Outline the costs for any incentives you plan to offer.
 - Trainers, coaches, and mentors: Explain the total cost, the expertise of these people, and how they will add value.

4. Utilise Employee Influencers

Now that you have the approval of the senior manager and C-Suite execs, it's time to get the buy-in of the employees who will be participating in the pilot. Identify the most influential employees in the department and get them excited about this new initiative. Explain the benefits:

- Direct incentives approved by the C-Suite
- Improvement in skills
- Increased chances of meeting KPIs and improving performance
- Promotion opportunities (if applicable)

Half the battle is won if you can get these employees excited about the program. They will encourage their team members to participate and provide the additional motivation needed to keep them going.

5. Measure The Results

Now that you have the approval of the senior manager and C-Suite execs, it's time to get the buy-in of the employees who will be participating in the pilot. Identify the most influential employees in the department and get them excited about this new initiative. Explain the benefits:

6. Expand The Program Company-Wide

The pilot program would have proven the direct impact an employee training program can have on business outcomes. Demonstrating this direct link to business outcomes to the C-Suite is crucial for getting support for a company-wide roll-out. Once you have their support and it's all systems go, you can identify other challenges that need to be addressed within the company and build training programs to address those problems.

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