

LOW COST AND FREE TRAINING RESOURCES

By: Nanette Miner, Ed.D.

It is costly - both in terms of time and money - to create your own training courses and very often you don't need to do so. Free and low-cost training resources abound in your backyard, if you just know where to look.

Local Colleges

If you have just one or two employees that need training, check the non-credit or continuing education catalog produced by your local college; these courses are always open to the "public." If you have a group that is large enough (a dozen or so), most colleges will send instructors to your company to conduct the training on-site.

Companies With Whom You Do Business

Many of your suppliers already have training programs in place to train their own people. Simply ask if you can borrow their programs or perhaps pay a fee to use them with your employees.

Public Seminar Companies

Public seminar companies provide all sorts of topics and courses for differing levels of employee need and proficiency. While these types of offerings used to be more soft-skills oriented, you'll find a wide array of technical topic offerings these days

Video

Watching experts perform and model correct behaviors and techniques is one of the fastest ways to learn a new skill. There are two options for video: training videos that you purchase on a particular topic or videos that you create yourself at your own workplace.

Creating your own training video in-house does not have to be an elaborate or expensive endeavor. You do not need expensive equipment or professional actors. Simply videotape the best people doing the job the right way, explaining it step-by-step as the process is completed, and voila you have a training video. In addition to watching an expert performed a skill correctly, another benefit of video-based training is that the trainee can refer to it as often as he or she needs.

The Web

I don't have to tell you that the Internet is a wonderful resource. In addition to eLearning courses which can be accessed on-demand at sites such as CyberU (<http://my.cyberu.com/home.asp>) and e-Learning Center (<http://www.e-learningcenter.com/index.htm>) you can also find free tutorials simply by using Google to search. Try various combinations of words, such as 'tutorial', 'demo,' and 'course' when searching. For example:

- Excel+demo
- Creating an Excel spreadsheet+tutorials
- Narrating a PowerPoint show+tutorial
- Unlawful workplace harassment+free online

- Safe lifting techniques+free online training

Microsoft also offers a wealth of software training, demonstrations, and tutorials for all of its Office products. Go to <http://www.office.microsoft.com> and look for "Training" in the left menu bar.

Associations

Professional associations are an often overlooked developmental resource. Most large professional organizations such as the American Society for Training and Development, the American Payroll Association, or the Association For Women In Communications have local chapters which meet monthly and offer speakers, seminars and workshops on topics that are of interest specifically to their membership. Typically, by being a dues-paying member of the chapter, one is able to attend these monthly events for free. Many professional associations also offer full day workshops or conferences as fund-raising activities at very reasonable fees.

Government Agencies

Agencies such as the Small Business Administration and the Small Business Development Center exist to provide consulting to small businesses. Training is often one of the forms that the consulting takes. For more information, visit <http://www.sba.gov/training/courses.html>. Also, search out assistance that is offered through your own state's Department of Labor via the U.S. DOL site at <http://www.dol.gov/dol/location.htm>.

Interns

High school and college interns are wonderful resources for training endeavors. Many institutions require their students to complete a workplace related project. If your local college or university offers human resource or training degree programs you are more than likely to find an individual, or perhaps even an entire group, that needs a placement site. Most often these resources will be helpful in gathering and organizing data. An intern with a focus on training may even have the skills to design customized training for you.

Teleseminars

Teleseminars are similar to conference calls in that many individuals dial into a common number at the same time, however teleseminars are usually designed for a large audience. The teleseminar, or tele-class, is conducted by an expert on a particular topic. This type of training typically lasts an hour or less. Similar to video-based training, you can find public offerings or create your own internal experts.

members to call in at their convenience. The seminar included twenty minutes of instruction and allowed for ten minutes of questions from the audience. A similar offering could be conducted for a new product release, giving the salesforce a quick tutorial on the features and benefits; or to assist employees in setting up a new computer at their desk rather than having the IT department visit each individual.

Conferences

Professional conferences, which are produced by professional associations and typically encompass three or more days at “destination” locations, are a wonderful way to immerse one’s self in learning. Conferences typically include general sessions which feature a well-known expert related to the theme or industry of the conference; concurrent sessions which are short, one hour to ninety-minute sessions conducted by various practitioners and subject matter experts; workshops, which are half-day to full-day sessions on a particular topic, usually held immediately before or immediately following the conference itself; and special events which can include plant tours or field trips to locations of interest to the conference attendees.

Almost every conference offers audio recordings of the general and concurrent sessions which you can purchase if you aren't able to attend the conference and person. Check out <http://www.allconferences.com> for a comprehensive list of conferences and a myriad of industries. Providing employee development does not have to be an arduous task. So long as you are able to apply a little creativity and look to your local and professional resources for opportunities.

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For more information on this topic refer to **The Accidental Trainer: A Reference Manual for the Small, Part-Time, or One-Person Training Department**, Pfeiffer, ISBN 0-7879-8046-3