



Training Is A Necessity

Distributors should provide continual learning opportunities to both internal employees and external customers

By Tina Serio Saunders

It doesn't really matter who you are, how old you are or what you do for a living ... lifelong learning is important. And yet, so many small businesses only pay lip service to training being a priority for their teams. Some see time away from job duties as an unnecessary expense. But I disagree.

Training programs should be offered to both internal employees and external customers. There are a number of benefits for keeping yourself, your sales teams, your prospects and your clients all up to speed on an immense number of topics that will leave everyone inspired and engaged.

Training keeps communication lines open. Whether you are a sales manager training your outside team on customer service, or a distributor sales representative training a group of floor techs on new equipment, face time with employees or janitors/clients is critical. It opens up two-way communication, enabling time for questions and answers, time for ideating, time for expressing concerns. What happens if these people never have the opportunity to communicate with you in a healthy environment? They communicate their real or perceived issues with other co-workers, other clients, other manufacturers, etc. What could be a two-way learning experience becomes a cloud of negativity.


Training is a value-add. Potential training options are a terrific excuse for distributors to

ensure they provide value for existing customers. When you can provide certifications and documentation for the customer's team, you make it even more of a value-added service. You also gain the opportunity to cross-sell or up-sell new products if current supplies are truly not meeting client needs.

Training can be a foot in the door to prospective clients. Just as training is a great excuse to see existing customers, it works just as well with prospects. You know that front-line janitors need GHS training, bloodborne pathogen training, cleaning process training, etc. The management could probably benefit from some training regarding budgets, sustainability or workloading. All of these can bring in new accounts.

Training is a perceived perk. Not only does training your own staff perk up the bottom line by creating a more prepared and productive team, it reinforces to your team (and your customers) that the management cares about their professional development, safety, opinions and long-term success.

When training is also paired with team-building activities, it has a strong impact on employee engagement.

Perception is key. A recent study by CSO Insights revealed that when your sales team has a positive perception of your internal sales training, it impacts several key performance indicators. The higher the perception of the quality of the training program, the more positive the effect on new account win ratios, sales team retention, sales team members at quota, and sales team members who are successful at aligning their solutions to the customers' or prospects' needs. 



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