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"Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do.

Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit."

- Aristotle, Philosopher

The Maine Center for Career Preparation is a private, non-profit committed to improving the economic prospects of Maine citizens.

Improving the linkages between education and workforce development is our goal.

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Education Works!

Overlooked Key to Effective Training: Trust

By Tom Broussard

What does trust have to do with training?

When the communication between employer and employee was one-way--when the boss told you what to do and you did it--*trust* did not carry the same weight as it does today. You didn't have to think. You did what you were told. Obedience was expected.

Obedience is out. Trust is in.

Today, communications between employer and employee must be much more collegial. As more workers become "knowledge workers" there is a greater need for self-direction. Employees are expected to figure things out for themselves or on teams.

Trust replaces authority where people are dependent on each other for success. Trust is not obedience. In the extreme, trust and obedience are mutually exclusive since complete trust

would make the concept of obedience obsolete, and complete obedience would eliminate the need for trust. Trust is in, but it is not easy.

Trust begets Trust

Trust is a shared reliance on each member of the group to do their job. In a high trust environment, a worker has as much right to expect that a supervisor will do their job as the supervisor has to expect the workers to do theirs. Trust flows both ways. If it doesn't, it isn't trust. You can only *get* more trust by *giving* more trust—a risky proposition for those unfamiliar with the structure of trust.

Training & Trust

Training used to be directed primarily at what people accomplished at a workbench or on an assembly line. Now training is more concerned with what goes on *between* one "work bench" and another. Increasingly, productivity depends more



on what people know and how well they can share what they know with others. These "knowledge products" move along an assembly line lubricated by trust.

Can't we all just get along?

Although training encompasses a wide variety of activities, it can be divided into two types--technical/skill training and human interaction training.

Technical/skill training is designed to improve the skills *within* an individual in accomplishing some task.

Human interaction training is intended to improve the interaction *between* individuals in the pursuit of their common goals.

As a greater percentage of work requires the creation, management, sharing of and access to knowledge, there has been more emphasis on human interaction training.

A genius may know all there is to know about a subject but if they cannot get along on a team--if they make things difficult--then the knowledge they have will be costly to access. It will come at a price measured in distrustful coworkers, tense work settings and time lost in resolving personnel disagreements.

The need for teamwork and good communications is not limited to internal interactions either. It typically includes customers, networks, suppliers, regulators, government personnel, etc.

What is training?

Training is aimed at bringing about some desired change in the skills, knowledge and/or attitudes of an individual. Successful training, involves change.

The best training then goes to work on your desire *to want to change*...

What a person does for work today is a smaller and smaller percentage of what is important to employers in a global economy.

How they do their job is now what employers value most in their employees.

Yes, employees must still know the software and tools required to do their jobs. But having the technical skills will not make up for what they lack in teamwork and good communications skills.

Employers want employees who know *what* to do and *how* to do it. As 21st century jobs become more knowledge work, and less physical work, *how* you do your job becomes more and more important.

As a result, a larger portion of the corporate training budget goes to communications, relationship and trust building training for managers and supervisors.

Training means—and had better mean—changing.

Great Expectations

When Jack Nicholson says to the character played by Holly Hunter in As Good As It Gets, “You make me want be a better man.” everyone in the audience sighs.

Well, too many people are going off to corporate training and NOT coming back better for it.

There is an expectation that training will make a person different. People expect to see some positive changes in the

supervisor or manager who returns from, say...team training.

Not that learning a new software program or technical skill won't bring about changes of a sort. But if the person returns from team training and is still the same difficult employee he was when he left, the training will have gone for naught. When curmudgeons go to supervisory training and come back unchanged, employees get upset.

Can you blame them?

Today's Toolkit

Today's employee toolkit includes skills often referred to as soft skills. These include teamwork, motivation, self-direction, dependability, enthusiasm and a desire to learn.

Consequently, corporate training must be mindful of the need for even their best qualified technicians, analysts, engineers, customer service reps and supervisors to return from training not just better at *what* they do but better at *how* they do it...and *how* do we do *that*?

The irony is that most human interaction training cannot deliver on what it promises. A course called *Trust 101* just doesn't exist. People have to *want* to change!

What corporate training *must* do is provide a trusting environment where these difficult issues can be considered honestly.

If you want your employees to be more trustworthy, you have to trust them. But *they* trust *you* to deal with the curmudgeons.