




The Ultimate Guide to Building a Better Workforce

Tips and Best Practices for Training and Developing Top-Performing Employees



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Introduction

Training and developing employees should be a top priority for any organization – **studies have shown** that investing in your employees can lead to increased profits, productivity, employee retention and company morale. Furthermore, employees now expect professional development opportunities regardless of their seniority or experience.

When it comes to building a corporate learning program, it can be difficult to know where to start. This guide will highlight some of the most popular corporate learning best practices to help you craft a training and development program that works best for your organization.

Formal vs. Informal Learning

Throughout this guide, we will discuss both formal and informal learning strategies.

Formal learning will be defined as a structured learning program with goals and objectives clearly outlined. An example of formal learning can be found in **Section 5: Crafting a Leadership Training Program for All Employees**.

Informal Learning will refer to any learning activities that occur outside of a set curriculum, often planned and executed by an individual employee. An example of informal learning can be found in **Section 6: Save Time With Microlearning**.





Hiring for Success



Hiring for Success

Building a better workforce begins with the hiring process. Hiring the right employees can increase your company's productivity and proficiency, while the wrong employees will waste time, energy and money. However, finding and hiring the right person can be difficult. To make this process easier, follow the steps outlined below, courtesy of EBSCO's corporate learning tool *Acce/5*®.

Attract Top Talent

The first step in the hiring process is getting the right candidates to apply. Attracting high-performing employees can be difficult for many organizations, which means that their hiring process is over before it began. In the book *Talent Management* by Mark Miller, [summarized on Acce/5](#), Miller outlines useful strategies to attract and keep the best employees.

To attract top employees, you must have a thorough understanding of their values. According to Miller, the three factors most commonly valued by top performers include exceptional leadership, opportunities for career advancement, and organizations that make a positive difference in the world. Be sure to highlight how your company meets these criteria through your company website, social media handles, job posting sites and during the interview process. To attract and keep top talent, your company should be prepared to consistently deliver on these promises well after new employees have been hired.

Begin With a Big Pool

In the business book summary for *The Best Team Wins*, [available on Acce/5](#), author Adam Robinson claims that hiring the right employees comes down to a simple numbers game. For example, Robinson believes that to find the perfect candidate, you should review at least 130 résumés. From these 130 people, 27 should be selected for a phone interview, and then nine of these candidates should be invited to the office for an in-person interview. After the interview process is complete, you should have three excellent finalists.



Hiring for Success

Narrow the Results With a Candidate Scorecard

Candidate scorecards are a quantitative and effective method to determine which candidates are best qualified for the job. Robinson recommends using a five-point scale to determine how a candidate rates on a set of skills, which should fall into the following categories:

Performance results

This category will help you assess if the candidate can produce quality work and achieve predetermined goals. To evaluate a candidate's capacity for performance results, ask questions such as:

- What role has quality played in your overall performance?
- What have you done in your last job to increase the company's revenues?

Performance factors

This category will help you to discover how a candidate's job knowledge, problem-solving, decision-making, innovation and creativity skills rate. To learn more about a candidate's performance factors, ask:

- How good are your organizational skills?
- What is your process for analyzing a problem that needs to be solved?

Interpersonal skills

This critical category will highlight how the candidate works with others and how they communicate information and ideas. To assess a candidate's interpersonal skills, ask them:

- What is your communication style?
- Do you like working with other people?
- Who's the best boss you've ever had, and why?

Be Willing to Negotiate

After investing time and resources in the hiring process, you do not want a top candidate to decline your job offer. To prevent this, you should be open to having honest conversations with the candidate. Before making the offer, ask the candidate about their expectations and if they have other job offers pending. Determine if their initial expectations are realistic for your company and aligned with industry standards. From there, you should communicate the salary and benefits that you are willing to offer. Leave the conversation open for any questions or concerns. Once the employee has accepted, send over their written offer.





Corporate Learning on a Budget



Corporate Learning on a Budget

Any corporate learning professional knows the value of a dedicated learning program. Unfortunately, many organizations face tight budgets and time constraints that can make creating a training and development program nearly impossible.

To create an effective learning program, you do not have to spend a fortune. In fact, you can utilize your own employees to help each other learn and develop professionally.

Establish a Mentorship Program

The best place to begin a corporate learning program is with new hires. To make this process easier, implement a mentoring program in your company that pairs each new hire with a more experienced member of their team. Depending on the level of training necessary, new hires can shadow their mentors or meet with them regularly. This will work not only to teach new hires how to complete their job, but it will also help to make them feel more comfortable. Additionally, mentors will feel a greater sense of responsibility in their own roles. Your mentors don't need years of experience or an important title, and you might be surprised by who thrives in this role.

Appoint a Learning Liaison

Think about each of the departments in your company and the managers within those departments. Who stands out to you? Are there people who consistently go above and beyond? Meet with them to see if they would be willing to act as a learning liaison.

As a "learning liaison," this employee will work directly with colleagues as a mentor or coach. Assign specific responsibilities such as regular

check-in meetings with team members or presentations on recent (successful) projects. When an employee is struggling, have the learning liaison provide guidance to get back on track. When the budget allows, send them to relevant conferences and have them report back to their group.

Train Across Departments

To truly utilize your company's resources, be sure to expose all employees to every possible career path. Hiring from within means that your employees will already have background knowledge about your company. To pique their curiosity, host regular meetings in which employees from each department get a turn to present about their role in the company. For example, you can set up a recurring "Lunch and Learn" where a different team or department will prepare a presentation on their roles and responsibilities. These meetings don't have to be formal — let employees speak honestly about their day-to-day jobs.






Training and Development by Learning Styles



Training and Development by Learning Styles



For both new and existing employees, you want to be sure that you create a corporate learning program that is effective for all learning styles. The concept of “learning styles” outlines how individuals learn differently. This idea has been studied extensively in academic settings; however, it can often be overlooked in the workplace. Many organizations use a “one-size-fits-all” approach to training and development. Unfortunately, this may not be the best way to ensure that employee learning styles are addressed and your staff truly grasps important concepts.

Understanding the Learning Styles

One of the most common ideas surrounding learning styles is that individuals often fall into one of the following categories: auditory learners, kinesthetic learners, visual learners and verbal learners (reading/writing).

- Auditory learners prefer that new content is presented through listening and speaking situations.
- Kinesthetic learners understand information through hands-on practice.
- Visual learners understand information best when it is presented through images.
- Verbal learners learn best through words, specifically through reading and writing.

Learning Styles in the Workplace

Many corporate learning programs are inadvertently tailored to auditory learners. These individuals thrive when they are presented information through lectures, seminars and group discussions, which are popular methods of training employees. These are the employees who can attend a conference and come back with a thorough understanding of the topic presented.

Kinesthetic learners have an advantage in the workplace as well. The act of performing their job is tied to their preferred learning style. The hands-on learning that occurs in their day-to-day duties helps them to understand and retain information. They may not seem engaged in training workshops, but when left to their own devices, they generally thrive. To help kinesthetic learners retain new information, you could consider more “hands-on” workshops, or a “buddy program” where they have the opportunity to teach a coworker what they’ve learned.

Visual learners thrive in an environment that uses images to convey ideas. They prefer graphs and charts over group discussions, and PowerPoints or videos over lectures. Help visual learners understand key concepts with engaging videos on relevant topics that will hold their attention.

Verbal learners will often be the employees with pages full of notes after a meeting. They understand information best when they can read it or write it down. If they are struggling with a concept, they might take their own time to look it up and read more on it. Provide verbal learners with a tool that will help them access reputable materials for their independent research.



Training and Development by Learning Styles

Training and Developing All Learning Styles

It can seem daunting to try to incorporate all four learning styles into your training and development strategy. However, with the right approach, you can ensure that all employees are given an opportunity to succeed. EBSCO has outlined a variety of different training and development strategies in the chart below that you can utilize to develop a holistic program.

	Auditory	Kinesthetic	Visual	Verbal
Training Seminars	✓			✓
Industry Conferences	✓			✓
Hands-on Workshops		✓		
PowerPoint Presentations			✓	
Videos/Webinars			✓	✓
Books/Book Summaries				✓
Audiobooks	✓			
Magazine Articles				✓
Training Colleagues	✓	✓		





Crafting a Leadership Training Program



Crafting a Leadership Training Program

Leadership development programs are a key aspect of any corporate learning strategy. Developing and grooming employees to become leaders requires a well-rounded strategy that focuses on specific skills relevant to your organization's needs. EBSCO has provided the steps required to create a program that will help your employees reach their full potential.

Outline Critical Competencies

The first step to creating any corporate learning program is deciding the focus. With a leadership development program, you should identify eight to 12 key competencies that your training will focus on. These competencies should include critical soft skills such as **project management**, teamwork, communication, **time management**, and more. You can identify these competencies by utilizing employee surveys to see where your company can improve. It may also be helpful to review your organization's mission statement for a quick refresh of goals. Make sure that your final list is broad enough that it is inclusive, yet not overwhelming for your audience.

Curate Your Content

Your next step is finding content that is suitable for your program's goals and audience. Use free online resources to track down reading and videos on your chosen competencies. Be sure that your content is actionable and that employees can put the concepts into practice immediately. If you are having trouble finding the right content for your program, explore curated corporate learning tools such as EBSCO's **Acce/5**. *Acce/5* is a microlearning solution that features videos, business book summaries, and articles spotlighting best practices from an unparalleled group of business leaders.



Crafting a Leadership Training Program

Prepare Your Audience

Prior to the program, have your audience complete “pre-work,” such as reading relevant book summaries or articles or watching video clips that will prepare them for their upcoming training. Ensure that the content is concise and engaging – employees should spend no more than ten minutes a day on their pre-work.

Hold Your Program

Your leadership development program should be customized to your company’s needs, while also utilizing some general ideas. You want to be sure that your program is long enough to be effective, but not so long that employees will fall behind with their work. Many companies have found that two to five days is an ideal amount of time. Another useful tip is to partner each attendee with a counterpart, or “buddy.” As buddies, these employees will be responsible for holding each other accountable both during and after the program. Finally, be sure that you are checking in with employees throughout the program to assist with any questions or challenges that they may face.

Following Up

A successful program does not end once the training is complete. Be sure to follow up with attendees at various points. Immediately after the program has concluded, give attendees access to a corporate learning solution to help them continue their development. About a month after the program, check in with the employees to see if they are still speaking with their buddy – if they are not, encourage them to reach out. Finally, once you have run your program multiple times, send out another company-wide survey and review the results to see how you can improve your next program.



A man with short dark hair and glasses perched on his head is looking down at a laptop. He is wearing a light blue button-down shirt. The background is a blurred office environment with a blue cubicle wall and a plant. A teal banner with white text is overlaid on the bottom half of the image.

Save Time With Microlearning



Save Time With Microlearning



Microlearning has become an integral part of training and development programs in recent years. The technique includes taking small pieces of information and spreading it through a variety of formats, including videos, book summaries, articles and more. Microlearning is designed to be completed in just minutes a day, so that busy employees can continue their professional development without sacrificing their daily to-do lists.

Why Implement Microlearning?

As many busy professionals know, it can seem impossible to find the time to develop critical competencies. Microlearning is changing the way in which employees develop skills, allowing them to learn on their own schedules, in the format that is most convenient to them. Some notable benefits of microlearning include:

Efficient	Accessible	Effective	Customizable
For those who are short on time, microlearning allows for learning in smaller increments. This allows for the flexibility to learn new skills, without falling behind at their “day job.”	Microlearning can take place anywhere; employees do not need to be in the office. They can read a book summary on their lunch break or listen to a short video on their commute home from work. Anywhere they take their smartphone, they can also take microlearning.	Microlearning is delivered via rich media formats, which promotes knowledge retention.	Microlearning allows your employees to create their own learning program, focusing on skills that they need to improve or the competencies most important to your company.



Save Time With Microlearning

How to Create a Successful Microlearning Plan

It is important to remember that not all microlearning is created equally. To implement a successful microlearning strategy, you must provide meaningful content that reaches your employees at their time of need.

Keep in mind that your lessons must be:

Convenient

Ensure that your microlearning plan is easy for your employees to access. A devoted microlearning platform, loaded with your complete library of employee development content, may be the best way to reach your employees.

Mobile

All lessons should be responsive so that employees can access them on their mobile phones or tablets. An important aspect of microlearning is that it can go anywhere with your employees.

Concise

Each lesson should be designed to be read or watched in under five minutes. Focus on quick videos, condensed articles and book summaries.

Actionable

Content within your microlearning lessons should provide valuable information and key take-aways that employees can put into practice immediately.

One of the benefits of microlearning is that it can be tailored to meet the needs of your company, as well as your employees.

Some examples of effective microlearning practices include:

- **Formal Training Plan**

If, for example, you've found that your company lacks leadership, you can create a "formal" microlearning plan for your employees. You could select the best book summaries, articles and videos on leadership, and require that your employees use a certain amount of time (no more than 10 minutes a day!) to improve that skill.

- **Supplement to Formal Training**

Microlearning is the ideal means of reinforcing learning that has already taken place. Following up a formal training with a variety of short lessons can ensure better retention of the knowledge.

- **As-Needed Basis**

Sometimes, it is best to give your employees the tools they need to succeed and let them choose their own path. With this approach, everyone can choose what areas they are interested in or need improvement in and learn more as they feel it necessary.



Save Time With Microlearning

Deeper Dive: Common Microlearning Mistakes (and How to Avoid Them)

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When done correctly, microlearning is a great way to encourage professional development and continual learning. However, there are mistakes that even the savviest organizations can make when trying to adopt this practice.

Cutting Down Existing Lessons

A very common microlearning mistake is believing you can simply take existing lessons, such as videos or articles, and make them shorter or split them into multiple parts. Although it may be appealing to utilize the content you've already created, it's important that microlearning content is specifically designed to be consumed in under ten minutes.

A key factor of microlearning is to provide content that is self-contained — an employee must be able to complete a single microlearning module without the need to follow up with another lesson. Each lesson must focus on only one or two concepts to be effective. When traditional courses are simply shortened or split into multiple parts, they often end up missing key information or require the employee to complete more courses on the same topic.

Thinking that Microlearning Works for Everything

It's important to realize that microlearning is not appropriate for every training or learning opportunity. There are some topics that cannot be condensed into five-minute clips. For example, microlearning would not be recommended for training on a very technical and complicated skill. Microlearning may be better suited to develop "soft skills" such as teamwork, communication or management skills. Employees should be able to utilize lessons on very specific skills they would like to improve with actionable content. It is unlikely that an organization would be able to train an employee on a new technology in just a few minutes.



Save Time With Microlearning

Deeper Dive: Common Microlearning Mistakes (and How to Avoid Them)

Not Having an Implementation Plan in Place

With any new corporate learning initiative, make sure you have the right plan in place to get employees on board. Because microlearning is informal, some organizations may assume that an implementation plan is not necessary. Avoid this common mistake, or your microlearning resources will not be utilized to their full potential.

To ensure the success of your microlearning initiative, create an in-depth implementation plan that will get employees excited to use their new tools. Some ideas might include sending communication emails leading up to the launch of the new program, holding a training workshop on the new resources available, hanging posters throughout your organization and alerting employees whenever new content is available.

Not Investing in the Right Tools

Many organizations simply do not have the capacity or budget to create a library of new content from scratch. This can lead to some of the common microlearning mistakes mentioned above such as shortening lessons that have already been created or using microlearning for the wrong topics.

To implement a microlearning program, it is important to invest in a tool that has ready-made lessons that can be customized to your company's specific competencies. EBSCO's *Acce/5* features videos, book summaries and articles to help your employees develop critical soft skills. This microlearning tool has content designed specifically for microlearning purposes, so you know you are avoiding common microlearning mistakes.






Recruiting and Retaining Millennials



Recruiting and Retaining Millennials



Millennials, also known as Generation Y, will comprise half of the workforce by 2020. Millennials have a different set of workplace values than do previous generations. They desire a work-life balance, appreciation from management, and a chance to grow and learn in their company. Millennials expect that their company will provide them with the tools to continue development throughout their careers.

Continual learning is a major selling point for many millennials. In Gallup's report *How Millennials Want to Work and Live*, 87 percent of millennials responded that professional development is "very important" to them at work. According to this report: "Millennials are not pursuing job satisfaction — they are pursuing development. Giving out toys and entitlements is a leadership mistake, and worse, it's condescending. Purpose and development drive this generation."

To recruit and retain this young workforce, organizations would be best served by investing in continual learning programs. Train and develop your young workforce using common coaching best-practices, including:

- Concise and actionable lessons (see: [microlearning](#))
- A variety of rich media formats customized to various learning styles
- Self-directed learning opportunities
- Mobile-responsive content that can be consumed anywhere

Training Your Millennials' Managers

Millennials value a positive, enriching relationship with their managers. To help retain millennial employees, it would be beneficial to assist your managers with tips on how to coach their younger employees.

Adjust

Their coaching approach will vary depending on the individual. Managers should consider an individual's learning style and their performance level to help craft their coaching style.

Give Feedback

When feedback is given with the right intentions, it will provide positive results, boost morale and transform new employees into excellent employees.

Meet Regularly

Managers should have weekly meetings to work on specific skills to help their new employees build their confidence.



Bringing It All Together



To create the ideal training and development program for your company, it is critical that you utilize strategies that are proven to be effective, in a way that will work for your organization. Carefully choose what ideas would be best to implement in your corporate learning strategy, while adhering to the following general rules:

- **Blend formal and informal learning practices**
Ensure that you are providing plenty of educational opportunities at your company with both formal and informal learning.
- **Invest in your hiring process**
Create a hiring strategy that will ensure that you attract and retain top employees.
- **Utilize existing employees to train their colleagues**
Identify top-performing employees and ask them to work with their colleagues for development opportunities.
- **Understand and adapt to different learning styles**
When creating a training and development program, be sure that you are offering content that is accessible for any learning style.
- **Employ microlearning for informal learning opportunities**
Microlearning is the ideal solution for informal learning and developing critical soft skills.
- **Focus formal learning on critical skills**
Be sure to outline top priorities for formal learning – such as leadership development.



EBSCO Can Help



EBSCO's *Acce/5* is the perfect supplement for your corporate learning program. This microlearning platform features business book summaries, videos and articles from top thought leaders such as Herminia Ibarra, Marshall Goldsmith, Jim Kouzes, Daniel Pink, Liz Wiseman and many others. Features of *Acce/5* include:

- **Insight From Thought Leaders.**
Acce/5 features exclusive content from members of "Thinkers50," the premier global ranking of management thinkers.
- **Concise Content.**
Acce/5 is a microlearning solution with all content designed to be consumed in just minutes.
- **Soft Skill Focus.**
Content in *Acce/5* is focused on critical soft skills such as leadership, teamwork, innovation and more.
- **Customizable Experience.**
Acce/5 offers functionality to customize the platform to highlight the competencies most important to your organization.

To learn more about **Acce/5**, [visit our website](#) or [request a free trial](#).

