

How to Know Whether Training Is Worth The Cost or a Waste of Resources

Written by: Dr. Scott Arias, President, ACE Consulting

PUTTING THE RIGHT PERSON IN THE RIGHT SEAT.

Is training really a waste of time and money? Many are quick to respond “yes” or “no,” but it is wise to consider a few items before answering the question. Before you even begin to respond, you must understand what training truly is. When discussing the subject, it may be easy to confuse training with formal post-secondary education.

These two professional development activities, though often lumped together, are not the same. Training and formal education have vast differences in content and objective. These differences are most commonly seen in the time commitment required, program length, and cost.

However, the most important difference between the two professional development activities is the end goal.

The goal of formal education is to teach people how to learn. Training, on the other hand, has the specific goal of equipping people with hands-on skills, experiences, and product or process knowledge. Though different, formal education and training can complement each other.

When people are equipped with the ability to learn, training is then able to be most impactful through teaching specific and practical skills. Consider the project schedule, for example. Education at the post-secondary level teaches theory and principles around Gant charts, network diagrams, and critical path methodology. On the other hand, training does not



specifically teach the why, but, rather, focuses on the how-to, such as the recovery of negative float.

Like most industries, construction has been subject to the fast pace of change over the past three decades. Training equips construction management professionals with the skills to keep up.

Now, with an understanding of training, the question becomes: “When is the appropriate time to train?” It can be as difficult to determine when to train as it is to determine whether you train. During good economic times, people are not likely to invest in training because they are busy making money. During poor economic times, people are not likely to invest in training because they do not have the resources available.

This inevitably leaves business owners to ask: “When do you train?” The answer to this question is simple: “Always.”

Training is a necessity to stay up to date and relevant. There is no denying we are living in a technology-driven world, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, there is now a whole generation of individuals who have no knowledge of living in a society predating the internet, smartphones, social media, electronic communication, etc. However, at the intersection where technology meets the workplace, there is a revolution that began in manufacturing and ultimately found its way to construction. With the frequent improvements being made to today’s tools, refinements in processes, and advancements in technology, continuous training is a necessity, not a luxury.

Training is an investment in both people and business capability. But it does cost time and money. So, ultimately, is the investment worth the cost or are you wasting resources?

From an employer perspective, either a failure to train or a failure offer training opportunities can have two inevitable results. The first scenario is that a superstar performer will become disillusioned with the organization. The employee will perceive the lack of training opportunities as the company’s lack of interest in investing in their professional development. This often results in the employee seeking a new employer who better values their contributions, and departing their current role for that new employer.


Worse yet, the second scenario is that your company’s average or subpar performers will stay and risk a decline in the organization’s level of performance, because performance expectations are established by the lowest performer.

To avoid both scenarios described above, first consider the person who might be trained. Is this person the right fit for your organization? Are they committed to your organization? Do they embrace and embody the culture you have established? If you answer “no” to any of these questions, investment in that person through training is not wise. While you can teach and develop skills, you cannot teach and develop intrinsic qualities. The key to investing in training is to identify the right person. Unfortunately, many employers consider training to be a waste of resources because, simply put, they have not hired the right people. So how do you know if you have? Look for these five basic traits:

- » Winners are obsessive about what they do.
- » Winners learn fast and they do not need to be told what to do in detail.
- » Winners get frustrated by people who are not like them.
- » Winners are focused on the organization, rather than their individual contribution.
- » Winners are easy to spot, but tough to describe.

With the right person identified to invest in, an organization must consider whether the individual’s contributions align with their personality and desires. This is referred to as the “right seat.” When the right person is in the right seat, they will thrive in what they do. So, how do you know if someone is in the right seat? Look for these five items:

- » They are the best at what they do.
- » They gravitate toward necessity for additional training and education.
- » They communicate their desire to grow, within the context of their current and future position.
- » They will define the duties and responsibilities through actions.
- » They do not limit themselves by working hours; their work is defined by what they get done, rather than how long it takes to get done.

Training will always be specific and situational, and it will always come with a cost. However, with the right person in the right seat, training can be an investment. This type of investment will not only help your organization grow, but also allow you to retain key staff members who can learn, share and teach others. So, before your organization invests in training, ask yourself whether you have the right person in the right seat who will ensure an investment is warranted and useful. 



About the Author

Dr. Scott Arias is the president of ACE Consulting, a construction consulting firm focused on Division 1 requirements. He holds five degrees in management, a doctorate in construction management, and a residential builder license in Michigan. Arias is a certified professor constructor (CPC), project manager professional (PMP), planning and scheduling professional (PSP), safety trained supervisor construction (STSC), certified quality control manager (CQC), and a Seabee combat warfare specialist (SCWS). He is also a retired professor and program coordinator of construction management at Eastern Kentucky University. Visit ace-consulting.net.

About the Article

Republished from [Construction Business Owner](#). Construction Business Owner (CBO) is the leading business magazine for contractors and is designed to help owners of construction firms run successful businesses. Founded in 2004, CBO provides real-world business management education and knowledge that is of real value to the owners of construction companies.

Any views and opinions expressed in this article may or may not reflect the views and opinions of the Construction Management Association of America (CMAA). By publishing this piece, CMAA is not expressing endorsement of the individual, the article, or their association, organization, or company.