

The Star  
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# WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A TRAINER

## Hone the skills that can help you transform people and organisations

**T**RAINING is the process of imparting the skills and knowledge people need to do a particular job or activity. It involves changing attitudes and mindsets so that people can improve their job performance and develop personally. The sum total of better performance from all its trained employees ensures that an organisation has a higher output and greater returns on investment.

**Training benefits**  
Training is a growing trend worldwide. It enables employees to keep abreast of changes in business, technology and organisational methods. The advantages of training are manifold. It reduces errors, expenses, staff turnover, accidents and lost time. It generates higher profits, creates new customers, maintains existing customers and improves client relationships. It also increases customer satisfaction, production, quality, staff morale and public image.

**When to train**  
Training is used to orientate new employees. It introduces new skills to existing employees. Training upgrades employees' knowledge when there is a change of job function or environment. For example, when a company automates its functions and services, its workers have to learn how to navigate the new computer systems.

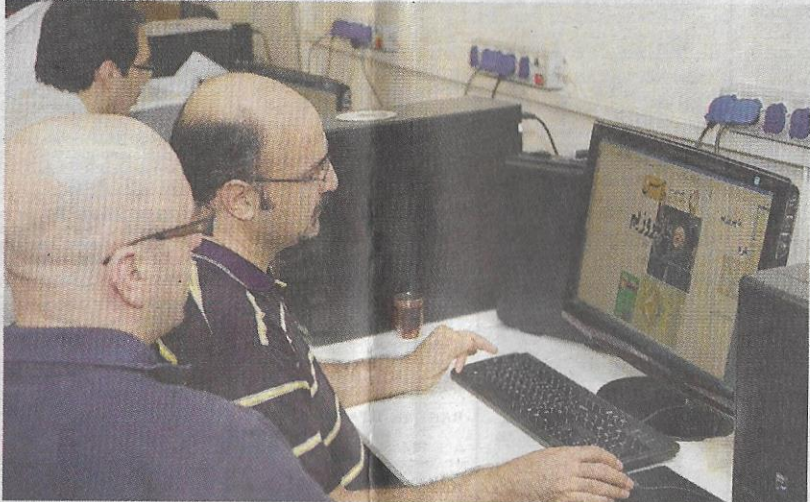
Training is also necessary to narrow the skill gaps between desired and actual standards. If a company wants to improve performance for certain tasks, such as getting the sales staff to bring in higher sales, training can help to achieve that objective. Training is required to fulfil an organisational need, for instance, to provide a higher level of service. For managerial positions, it provides executive development.

Sceptics who query the return on investment (ROI) from training often ask: "What does it cost to train someone?" The important question should be: "What does it cost not to train employees?" One answer is: Poorly trained staff can cost a company lost sales, customers and its reputation.

Most companies do not dispute the necessity of training their employees regularly. In fact, the fast-changing marketplace demands that workers upgrade their skills and knowledge constantly. This, in turn, has boosted the demand for corporate trainers.

**The trainer's role**  
A trainer has many roles actually. He is an instructional designer, curriculum developer, career coach, mentor, counsellor and facilitator. He is also a sounding board for sparring ideas and a listening post for worried employees. At times, he is the sponge that absorbs complaints from course participants who take the opportunity to get something off their chests.

**Qualities**  
An ideal trainer has "CASH":  
■ **Content:** He must know his subject thoroughly.  
■ **Attitude:** He is passionately committed to sharing knowledge with others.  
■ **Skills:** He is a charismatic speaker, has high EQ, is confident, humorous, sincere and patient.  
■ **Habits:** He is organised, flexible, independent and participant-focused. The training room is his stage. Come rain or shine, in sickness or in health, the show must go on. The trainer must walk the talk. He must maintain credibility at all times. He handles feedback positively. In the face of negative feedback, he bites the bullet. He acknowledges his failure, identifies solutions and designs changes to improve his performance in the next course.



What does it cost not to train employees?  
- Reuterspic

**Logistics**  
When a trainer shows up, the company's training coordinators send him off to the training room with the words: "Break a leg!", just as they would wish a stage actor. They know that Murphy's Law applies here. Things that can go wrong will go wrong. For example, the room may not be arranged to his requirements. His laptop and projector may not be "talking" to each other. Flip chart paper may be insufficient, air-conditioners set at arctic levels, manuals with wrongly collated pages — these are just some of a trainer's challenges. There are also a lot of training tools to take along — CDs, manuals, games, hi-fi set, laptop, projector and props. He has to pack them in his office, unpack and repack again in the training room. A trainer is expected to do stand-up delivery

the entire day. He has to change the flow to suit participants or logistics, for instance, when the television fails to work. When participants are slow, he adjusts the pace of learning. A perfect training day is a dream. No matter how meticulously a trainer plans, there will be a hitch somewhere. But the professional trainer has learnt over the years to take it all in his stride. He knows that he, of all people, cannot lose his cool — or he will lose his audience. — Source: ST/ANN

- **Tomorrow: How to teach adult learners**
- **Article by Michael Lum, PhD, a master trainer who helps mid-life executives launch second careers as trainerpreneurs.**