

# “INVEST IN YOUR EMPLOYEES OR OPERATE IN MEDIOCRITY”



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Training and development of employees has historically been a controversial issue within organizations. The human resources department has always been the advocate for this, understanding that it is a necessary part of growing and maintaining a competitive workforce. Unfortunately, some senior managers who control the budget priorities do not seem to share their point of view.

There are those who see employee training and development as detracting from the bottom-line, rather than enhancing it through greater productivity and effectiveness. Or, they irrationally fear that after spending money on them, those employees will somehow feel inclined to leave, taking their new knowledge and skills to another employer. Ironically, the opposite seems to be true: in general, employees who are in a company that invests in their growth and development tend to contribute at a more productive level and maintain a greater sense of loyalty.

Establishing the value of training and development in an organization is a philosophical / cultural issue, as well as a budgetary one. Whether or not it is officially defined in a company's values statement, the perceived value (or lack thereof) that an organization places on employee development will evidence itself in the expression of its everyday operations, decisions and discussions.

There are a number of rationalizations that management may hold as to why employee development is unnecessary, or a waste of time and money:

- “He has a college degree, so that should be enough.” (But what is the degree in, how old is it, and is it relevant to his ability to perform well at his job?)
- “She’s been doing her job just fine for the past ten years.” (Don’t you think she might be getting stale or bored by now? And over ten years her job must have changed in a way that would require new skills to keep up.)
- “He doesn’t need to go to that conference. Too expensive and a waste of time.” (People who attend conferences say that beyond the updated information they get at these events, they get tremendous value from meeting others in their field and hearing about successful best practices which they can take back and apply within their own organization.)
- “What if I spend this money on her training and she leaves?” (What about the mediocre or uninspired job she will do without it? And what is keeping her from leaving otherwise? Might she be tempted to go work for an organization that wants to invest in its people? )
- “We only spend for the training of our sales force. They’re the ones who bring in the revenue” (What about the rest of the organization on whom the quality of the product, service, operations and customer support depends?)
- “We hire qualified and talented people to begin with. Why should we spend more money on them?” (Did you know that the new “Grow me!” workforce thrives on learning? They will not stay with an organization that does not continue to invest in their continued learning and development.)

Smart businesses are realizing that they must invest in the training and development of their people in order to be competitive in attracting and retaining the best talent. Otherwise, they risk losing their best employees and settling for mediocre or minimally performing ones.