

Making Training Stick

By Judith Filek—President
Impact Communications, Inc.

Customer service organizations spend thousands of dollars each year on training. The hope is to improve skill sets, increase productivity, close more business or create customer loyalty. While typically there is a “bump” in improvement after any class, over time, the effect of the training seems to diminish. So what is the answer to making training stick?

First, participants need to know that management is expecting them to improve. At the conclusion of each class, they should create an action plan of the things they want to improve and how they will do it. Action plans should be realistic and tied to specific time frames. For example, a participant might say, “*I want to improve the tone of my voice. I will practice by pausing more for inflection and will also tape myself two times a day for a month. I will get feedback from my supervisor who will listen in on my calls at the end of the month.*”

Participants should share their action plans with their managers within one week after the training. This will reinforce the idea that the person will be held accountable for improvement. The supervisor or manager should offer suggestions or ask questions as appropriate. If a face to face meeting isn't possible due to location, the individual should e-mail the action plan and review it with his or her manager over the phone. Ideally, improvement in the identified areas should become part of the individual's performance review.

Managers and leads then need to become observant coaches. If the rep or sales person is making progress, he or she should be applauded. If the person has forgotten a skill, the supervisor must be ready to offer suggestions. This may require the supervisory team to participate in the same training as their representatives. A class on how to coach might also be appropriate.

Lastly, team meetings are another good way of discussing and reinforcing the concepts from a class. People can practice by role playing, etc.

Through training, people improve and exceed customer expectations. To make training stick, individuals must be held accountable and managers must coach.

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their presentation and telephone communication skills. It is not what you know but how you communicate it that makes a difference. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our web site, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.

