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Making do with less shouldn't apply when it comes to training

Every day we're bombarded with more bad news about the economy. With all the negativity, there is a natural tendency to want to retrench.

We may put off getting a new car, scale back the family vacation or buy our kids a cheaper brand of sports shoes. In other words, we make do with less.

Companies are no different. Executives are quick to look for ways to reduce their costs, too. However, in their efforts to make do with less, too often they cut employee initiatives like training and development programs that may seem superfluous but, in reality, play a vital role in keeping employees engaged and productive.

Whether an attorney is seeking continuing legal education credits or a machinist is learning to use a new piece of computer-automated equipment, training and development programs can help broaden professional skills and competencies.

Equally important, training allows employees to contribute more significantly to their company by better recognizing the organization's objectives, relating more closely to a colleague's perspective, or responding faster to a customer's needs.

When training deepens employees' understanding of the organization and the people they work with inside and outside the company, it expands their decision-



**PEOPLE
PERSPECTIVE**

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making capabilities and, as a result, their efforts are more focused and relevant, their attitude more tolerant and positive, and customer interactions more perceptive and meaningful.

In today's challenging market, companies need capable employees. Training and professional development programs can augment employees' capabilities and instill a sense of self-confidence so they are better conditioned to perform, and prepared to take on greater responsibility should the need arise.

No one wants to think about the possibility of job cuts, but should that happen down the road, cross-training employees now can ensure remaining employees are primed to perform multiple tasks so a company can sustain its productivity during the downturn.

Even if layoffs don't happen, employee turnover still might. While some business owners would like to believe that in a tight job market employees will be satisfied with the status quo, the reality is that there is always a demand for good talent and exceptional people can find work in any economy.

If employees are dissatisfied, they will be open to a move, and it will likely be your top performers who are hired away, leaving less-experienced or less-skilled employees to maintain operations.

Continuing training programs will help to ensure such employees are prepared to step up should it become necessary.

Of course, by providing opportunities for career development and advancement, it is

also more probable that your top performers will stick around.

It's a myth that if you train your employees, they will be more likely to take their newly earned skills and go job hunting. The opposite is actually true. Employees who are offered opportunities to develop their skills feel greater job satisfaction and are more committed to their employers, thus they are more likely to stay.

Opportunities to learn and grow professionally also contribute to employees' feelings of engagement in which they feel enabled and enthusiastic to contribute to their company's success.

If employers neglect their employees' intrinsic desire for professional growth and development, there can be negative repercussions. Some employees may become dissatisfied and choose to pursue a career path that appears more fulfilling.

Others will stay, perhaps because of a lack of opportunity or motivation, but they are likely to be disenchanted or disengaged and those feelings may ultimately be reflected in their performance.

When there is more bad news than good, it is natural to want to make do with less. However, less opportunity for employees to build critical skills and grow professionally is not the answer.

Investing in effective employee training programs can provide companies both immediate and long-term dividends.

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