Six Steps to an Effective Training Program

Successfully define, execute, and evaluate your process

By Joel Craddock and Brant Insero

Society perceives the professional cleaner as someone who swings a mop, and the job of a custodian as an entry-level position that doesn't require much education. There is no truth to this statement, as cleaning professionals require a great degree of knowledge and training to perform their duties well.

For many years, organizations have attempted to train frontline workers without a process in place. However, to create a successful training program for your organization that helps to cultivate the best staff, you will need to consider the following steps.

Step 1: Define Your Training

As your organization prepares a training program, it's important to ask the following questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? Knowing the answers to these questions will provide the focus and clarity that you need. Let's review them here:

- **Who** are you training? Are you training new employees, seasoned veterans who are having difficulties with a few areas of their work, or an entire division?

- **What** topic or area requires training? Is it a new job responsibility, new equipment, or a new area of coverage?

- **Where** is the training going to take place? Will it take place in a classroom or at the site where the person is having difficulties?

- **When** will you provide the training? Will it take place during the shift, before or after the shift is over, or on a weekend?

- **Why** are you conducting a training session? Why is it important to the organization and staff? Employees need to understand why they must participate.

- **How** are you going to provide this training? Will you institute all three adult styles of training (audio, visual, and kinetic)? Will staff members train others to ensure repetition, or will an outside expert handle the training? One current trend in training is online learning. Online learning platforms have a place, but nothing beats having an instructor-led program whenever possible. Interaction with the instructor allows for questions and a deeper understanding of the material, if it is not fully understood.

Step 2: Prepare Your Training

Any training professional knows that it takes time to prepare. Some leading experts say it can take between five and 10 hours of preparation time for every one hour of training time.

As a trainer for your organization, do you know where to find the content to deliver? How do you know the validity of the information that you are teaching? There are organizations that offer opportunities to hone your training skills, such as Cleaning Management Institute's (CMI) Train the Trainer program or ISSA's Accredited Certification Trainer (A.C.T.) program. These types of courses help you to become a more defined trainer.

A key component to organizing training is to ensure the area in which you will conduct the training session is set up in such a way that maximizes the training experience. Below are several key factors to consider when setting up the training space:

- **Have proper equipment and supplies on site.** If you're using a projector or connecting a laptop to a larger display screen, do you have the proper cables, extension cords and tape to prevent attendees from tripping on the cables, connectors, and an extra bulb in case the projector burns out? If performing hands-on training, do you have all of the equipment, materials, and supplies needed to perform the tasks?

- **Ensure everyone can see.** Placement of visual training aids is significant when setting up your training space. Where are you going to position the projector, screen, or easel, so you, the instructor, do not block the view of your students?

- **Have enough and appropriate materials on hand.** If working with an easel to write notes or perform calculations, make sure to have additional blank paper and markers in the event they run dry. Do you have dark markers so those sitting in the back of the room can see what is written?

- **Stay in tip-top presentation shape.** Are you keeping hydrated with room temperature water to ensure you do not damage your vocal cords?

Step 3: Practice Your Training

One reason many trainers fail is because they are unprepared and forget to practice. Without practice you don't have an idea of how your material comes off to others.

There are many practice techniques, including practicing in the privacy of your home or office, in front of a mirror or someone who will critique your performance, or by recording yourself in action. However you decide to practice, it is important to be cognizant of your pace, tone, inflection, and use of filler words (ahs, ums, etc.). Take a look at the presentation as a whole, right down to your mannerisms and the clothes you plan to wear. As a trainer, you're putting on a performance. The training room is your stage and the trainees are your audience. Make sure they're getting their money's worth.

Step 4: Deliver Your Training

Consider how you plan to deliver your material for your particular audience. Are you teaching classes that last all day? Remember: People need to get up and stay active to learn. Are you utilizing PowerPoint presentations with bullets to point out areas of emphasis? Are you performing hands-on presentations so each trainee will be able to participate? Whatever forms of presentation you choose to use, ensure you keep the target audience in mind and the various ways each trainee may learn best.

Step 5: Confirm Your Training

Once you have completed the training, how do you know if the trainees understand the materials? One such way to evaluate this is to give a written exam. This ensures the students have a solid understanding of the curriculum. Other tests may ask participants to perform the tasks in a hands-on manner to ensure a proper working knowledge of the procedure. This concept is known as a performance-based evaluation.

Step 6: Audit Trainee Performance

By implementing a quality audit system, you can hone in on your training needs, your performance as a trainer, and the success of your trainees. Many excellent quality-audit systems are out there, and they are able to track cleanliness levels by building, task, room type, zone, or cleaner. These software packages may help trainers understand where they need to direct more attention when training. In addition, they can help track the progress of an individual.

The Path to Success

By following these six steps, you should end up with empowered employees who do their jobs more effectively, and have knowledge and understanding on the best practices available.

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