



FIVE WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR TRAINING OPERATION

DESIGN INTERACTIVE

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused substantial upheaval for training and operations departments in the construction industry, especially for firms with a large distributed workforce or equipment manufacturers and suppliers that must train and support those workforces.

The construction industry is also seeing headwinds due to a talent shortage as older workers are retiring and fewer young people are choosing this industry. Further, the industry relies on communication between firms to maintain productivity, but shortcomings within the supply chain can make collaboration difficult. Lastly, legacy processes and training do not take advantage of modern technology which may impede innovation, making the industry and firm less attractive to prospective talent.

We know that training contributes to a higher level of employee satisfaction and lower turnover rates. Organizations that provide opportunities for growth may see greater satisfaction and possibly higher productivity while making themselves more attractive to prospective talent, including the next generation. According to Research.com, 68% of employees prefer to learn or train at the workplace, but 58% prefer to train at their own speed and almost half of employees prefer training only when it is necessary.

How can you deliver training that satisfies the current workforce, attracts the next generation, and meets your organization's productivity needs and complies with industry regulation? Here are five ways you can improve your current training operations to accomplish this.

1. Deliver self-guided training to the point of need.

Modern technology has made it possible for your employees to stay connected. They have access to information available on the internet, your learning management system, mobile apps, and more. However, if they are pulled into a live, hands on training session from the field, you will lose productivity. Your firm is only as good as its employees and you need to make sure they have the information they need in the right place and at the right time. This includes providing training to employees in the field when they require it, not just pulling them from the field on a predetermined schedule.

Service manuals or typical pdf formats of standard operating procedures usually include basic text descriptions or line drawings that are far from realistic representations of what is found in the field. Providing a self-guided training module or how-to guide, that includes quality instruction with short how-to videos that allow an employee to refresh their knowledge or particular skill, will do a better job of maintaining their competence level and may accelerate their development. Further, since more than half of employees want to train at their own pace and a significant majority want to learn at their place of work, you have successfully accomplished both by delivering self-guided training on their device at the point of need.

2. Use live, remote instructor-led training and deliver at scale.

The reality for some firms is their workforce is extremely large and are typically remote from a central office or training facility. This limits the ability of such a firm or their suppliers to deliver live, hands-on training. Live, small group training can be effective. However, this method is too slow for a firm that has hundreds, if not thousands, of remote trainees. The cost of live training with a large number of employees is substantial, in both travel and the potential lost productivity when an employee is in transit and taking the class.

Consider adopting a platform that provides live, instructor-led training at scale. A platform that ensures the knowledge and skills you train are applicable to a large number of employees, allowa you to train hundreds of employees at one time while they remain remote. This reduces the cost of training by allowing employees to receive training at their place of work and in some cases, the ability to immediately act on the new information.

Keep in mind the following when choosing the right instructor-led platform. The platform should allow you to include training material that can be accessed by the trainees after the event. For example, you should be able to make a self-guided training module available to the trainees immediately following the instructor-led session. Further, you should be able to record the training and disseminate as a video. Again, it is preferable for this to occur through the same application you use to deliver the training. You want to avoid managing multiple applications and training employees on how to use these applications. This can result in unnecessary information-technology troubleshooting.

3. Provide on demand support in real time.

Employees in the field will inevitably be confronted with a problem they can't solve. It may be equipment they can't quite return to service or difficulty determining the root cause of an issue with material or surfaces. Regardless of the case, they need assistance and they need it now, at the point of need. We all have mobile devices and most of us have used some form of video conferencing or collaboration, otherwise known as "See What I See" applications. This technology, whether it is on mobile devices or head mounted displays, allow an expert to collaborate in real time with the employee and solve the problem.

This feature can be quite effective for training remote employees as well. A good training program provides the right instructional information, at the right time, to the right people. A great training program measures performance and confirms the employee has interpreted the information correctly as to act on it. The same video collaboration tool for real time support can also be used to connect an instructor with a remote employee. The employee can guide an instructor through a process or demonstrate how to solve a problem. This is a great opportunity for instructors to confirm an employee has grasped the knowledge or skill appropriately.

4. Provide content on demand.

Mentors may be few and far between, and experts at your equipment suppliers or other vendors may not always be available. In fact, you are likely competing for the time of your suppliers' experts with other firms. However, it is important that your employees have access to the information they need, irrespective of the availability of these internal or external personnel resources.

Most employees have access to mobile technology. Whether it a phone, tablet, or ruggedized computer that is personally owned or provided by your firm, this gives them access to content you provide. This could be content from the cloud or downloaded onto their device. The key is creating effective content and distributing it in a manner that is easily available. Your employee can then access the information through their device and leverage that in lieu of other personnel to execute their task. Further, you have addressed the fact that almost half of employees desire to train when necessary. Keep content fresh and available on their devices and they will have higher satisfaction and productivity.

5. Effectively use modern technology like augmented reality.

The next generation of employees is growing up with and actively using technology like virtual and augmented reality. This technology is available on their phones and gaming consoles, while major technology firms are investing heavily to make it a part of our daily lives. This technology, particularly augmented reality, can not only improve the effectiveness of your training program but attract the next generation as well.

Augmented reality overlays digital information on the real world and is available on head mounted displays, or on phones and tablets your employees likely already own. AR platforms can be used to create self-guided training, run video collaboration sessions, and stream live, remote instructor led training. What differentiates AR training is the ability to visualize 3-Dimensional information digitally on top of, or in reference to, the real world and allows real-time interaction with it. Conversely, power point style learning is not interactive and limits opportunities for the employee.

Imagine training on the service equipment, but instead of bullet points on a slide or a service manual, you had a 3D model that not only shows what the equipment looks like under normal conditions, but also provides examples of wear and corrosion. As an instructor, you can live stream a view where the remote employees see this 3D model. You can walk around it, you can go underneath it, and you can even move certain parts to accurately demonstrate a process. Further, you can compare normal condition parts with those that are worn. You are now effectively teaching decision making. Finally, you record a video of your session and make available the same content and model on mobile devices and tablets so your hundreds of employees or more can walk through the example on their own.

The construction industry is experiencing significant challenges that are directly related to the workforce. In particular, attracting new talent and training them in effective ways that employees desire, while collaborating with suppliers and converting legacy technology to modern technology as to deliver training solutions that attract new talent. Now is the time to evaluate your training operations, remove inefficiencies, and create a new training infrastructure, while leveraging new opportunities to make a dramatic impact on your bottom line.

