

HR-SIG



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Wes Harry, our previous Chairman departed for Kuwait in the autumn and seems to be thriving in his new incarnation. Plenty of front-end HR thinking still coming from him, and his contributions are missed here in Riyadh.

I am delighted to have been selected by the SIG to represent the Human Resources issues on behalf of the RGBB and hope to be able to serve the team and RGBB well.

The SIG remains active, and preoccupied with issues of Saudisation, skills training and training for

employment, and the opportunities afforded UK education and training providers as the Saudis generally switch traditional allegiances away from the American market. The 'threat' of the introduction of personal income tax on expatriates has receded for the time being, much to the expatriate community's relief.

We have added to our number and the group now total 20 members, a reflection of the increasing importance and variety of HR challenges for all employers in Saudi Arabia, i.e. healthcare insurance, employment law, diversity and policies and procedures to name but a few.

BETTER TRAINING

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development recently conducted a survey to establish employees' attitudes towards training. Perhaps not surprisingly; it revealed that over 90% of respondents found training to be 'very successful' or 'quite successful'. Time and time again, training is identified as being a major motivator and, its value to employers and employees alike, increases further.

Yet the same survey revealed that only half of those being trained had had any follow-up discussions to rate the course's usefulness. This lack of follow-up is understandable - after all, training courses take key team members away from their day-to-day tasks. This puts pressure on the time-poor executives who, inevitably, get back to a mountain of work, leaving the lessons learnt on the course far behind them. Even if managers and colleagues take responsibility for their work in their absence, this usually has a knock-on effect.

The key to any successful training is to identify very accurately the individual training needs, so that the training provided is integral to career progression. Specific and targeted material should enhance a trainee's work in their current role and be a stepping stone to their next one. However, if training is not evaluated, quality is not monitored. Precious training budgets can get spent on inappropriate or ineffective courses, where key learning is soon forgotten. So how can a manager make sure his team is delivered relevant training, rapidly; at a low cost—and with minimum disruption?

One obvious solution is eLearning, where employees access their training through their laptops at a time to suit them. No travelling, no overnight stays - potentially no need to reassess work.

With eLearning, teams can progress at their own pace and select the information that is most relevant to their job, or current focus, saving valuable time and resources. These factors help training to become a strategic tool rather than a dull necessity. Another way in which technology is helping employees maximise their training time management is through web conferencing. Many organisations with a high output of new products or product upgrades have

found this to be an extremely effective means of rapid communication. Using web conferencing technology allows managers to quickly arrange a sales presentation and train team members in it 'instantly', wherever they may be located.

However, the delivery of training is just one of the considerations a manager must face. Regardless of whether training takes place on or off-site, it's really a course's content that determines its success. Getting the most out of a training programme requires emphasis on ensuring that the content is geared to the focus and growth of the business, and to the individual's own development needs, is one of the thoughts expressed by professional in the industry.

There are certain skills all staff should be regularly trained in, including Customer relationship management, which is extremely important, but requires a good mix of on-the-job experience and formal training.' Another way to secure effective course content is for a manager to devote some time to train the trainers. Don't be satisfied with an 'off-the-shelf' training package. Insist that training is tailored to your business' needs. The clearer the trainers are about your objectives, and the more they understand the individual's needs, the more effective their training will be.

Find the style that suits them
Finally, take into account that different people suit different styles of teaching. As such, you are unlikely to find a single training solution that will work across all your team. Some people will benefit from role playing and case studies, while others will respond better to visual mnemonics. Yet whatever means are used to communicate the message, most training professionals would agree that a good training course must include relevant, sector-specific examples.

Make your training budget go further

1. Define your objectives: Make sure the trainer knows exactly what areas you want him/her to cover.
2. Set achievable goals: Agree realistic outcomes for the salespeople being trained.
3. Share successes and failures: Encourage your team to give you honest feedback. If a course has been a waste of time, you need to know.