

Training, training, training

By Paperitalo Staff

Decades ago when I worked for that little soap company in Cincinnati, Ohio, there was a general philosophy that went as follows: we have never found the limit to return on advertising (no surprise) and training. Hence every year, we budget as much as we can for these two categories.

I think this is still true.

If you are in production or maintenance, when is the last time you sat down for formal training? What was it about? What did it do for your operations?

I suspect maintenance people may have more formal training than operations--a new pump, a new gearbox, new controller and so forth always comes with some training--a video, a pamphlet, interactive, to mention a few.

Today, training opportunities are ubiquitous. And training takes many forms, formal, informal, various media and so forth. Yet, it is often like the old joke a maintenance superintendent used to use: we don't have time to stop and load, just keep shooting!

Training should be a part of your life, both personally and organized at your place of work. I'll suggest the following way to approach it and make it part of your culture. First, every manager is in charge of and accountable for training, just like they are for safety. Managers solicit their own personnel, suppliers and any other appropriate source for training. Set up a quarterly training schedule. Pass to everyone. Each employee signs up for the courses of value to them, as approved by their supervisor. Guideline--training should consume 10% of everyone's work week. Yes, it will be a bit of a burden to start with, but soon it will start to pay off with a huge snowball effect. You do have time for it.

What will it do for your facility (and I don't care if you are a mill, supplier, consultant or whatever)? You'll have smoother, more profitable operations. In a mill, you'll have less unscheduled downtime and your downtime will be completed faster. You'll have less accidents. Maintenance costs will go down.

As time passes, and your program becomes more sophisticated (and it will), you will begin to use it as conditional material for promotions (you may be doing some of this already in the ranks, but it will increase). Then it becomes a measurable item for reviews. Overall knowledge levels go up and morale has a chance of improving. And all of these matters, taken collectively, spin the invoice printer faster.

I don't think that little old soap company was wrong. In the last 35 years, their annual sales have gone from roughly \$266,000 per employee per year to \$631,000 per employee per year. Inflation and other many other factors are certainly involved, but there is no doubt training played a large role, too. If you are not capitalizing on the power of training, start today!

And, it goes without saying, for we often mention it, continuous safety training is paramount.

Be safe and we will talk next week. ##