

The Value of Training

What is the value of training? I guess the answers depend on the type of training or perhaps your motivation for learning. Learning can and should be a lifelong process. Training helps you in various ways, from creating an enthusiastic work environment to increasing customer satisfaction. Many positive outcomes of training are tied together, so when you achieve one, oftentimes the others fall into place.

I'm often told by both clients and prospects that, "I just don't have the time" for things like learning software and training. I understand that the pace of business these days is sometimes crazy. I also think this is huge excuse and plays a role in why many businesses fail. I'm not talking about taking weeks off for training. I am suggesting a simple plan where you can invest as little as 15-20 minutes per day. Building a profitable business is going to require a plan. Part of that plan should include a training program which should include broad topics like: marketing, sales, management, leadership...etc. I would also suggest that you include in your training plan the specific software programs that you will be using the most. In our office the software list would look like this: Word, Excel, Outlook, ACT, and all of our graphics programs.

Here is a list of reasons or benefits why training is a worthy investment of your time and money. This list is answers, "what's in it for me?" This is your return on investment (ROI) for training:

- Increased productivity
- Reduced turnover
- Reduced waste
- Reduced mistakes
- Increased customer base
- Unshakeable customer loyalty
- Clear communication and expectations
- Increased self confidence
- Increased professionalism
- Problem solving

Let's get specific and talk about software training. With regards to graphics software there is typically a manual, a reference guide or training guide that explains the features of the software. Almost always you are given installation directions. If there are no instructions in the form of a manual or training guide, that may be a clue for you that the maker of the software doesn't really care if you succeed with their product. I don't know about you... but for me, reading a long, dry, 100 page technical manual is torture. Have you ever wondered if software manuals were written by engineers, full of technical jargon, to impress other engineers? No offense to engineers – my brother in law is one. It's my opinion that if you are going to write a training manual or reference guide then it should be kept short and sweet. The best training manuals are written in a simple and easy to understand format. They need to explain instructions in a style that is not overly technical. All I really want to know is what will this software do for me? If I get stuck – where are the simple directions and answers to get unstuck?

Demonstrations are another effective type of software training. Most of us would rather see the software in action than read about it. Most adults are visual learners. Using a demonstration as a training method also doubles the effectiveness of the training because the learner is watching and listening. The trainee watching the demonstration of the software actually has proof and confidence that it works and begins to create a reference point for future experiences. At the conclusion of a demonstration the trainee should be saying, "I can do that!"

The true breakthrough moment and pinnacle of training is in application. The trainee experiences the training not just by watching and listening... but by being involved... by doing! This type of software training is not often found on an industry specific level. By mastering simple processes the software user gains confidence to explore deeper levels and become a stronger user which yields more return on the original investment. At the conclusion of this type of experiential training the trainee should be saying, "I did that!"

If every thing I have written so far is true... then I would look for a software company that employs all three techniques:

- Easy to understand manuals and training guides

- Multi-media tutorials

- Class room and work shop style experiential training

Of course I am completely biased... but Digital Art Solutions is such a software company and just happens to provide all three methods.

I look forward to seeing you at another industry specific training seminar or even better... a future Digital Art Solutions Art Camp!