



Looking at the Most Cited Pain Points of Training Professionals

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In the employee training profession, as in any other, there are frustrations. And when talking about frustrations, let's admit it: There are things that irk us, and then are things that make us want to punch a pillow.

So I went ahead and looked into what really makes training managers, instructional designers, learning consultants, and anyone involved in the world of employee learning & development scream with pain. What are their biggest pain points?

After engaging hundreds of experienced professionals online and in person, and after evaluating various studies, reports and surveys, here are the results (**please note**: this is not a scientific study). Only by confronting each one of them, can we better understand them and be able to tackle them.

Pain Point 1. Failing to understand how people learn among the so called 'professionals'.

People are often frustrated by the capabilities of many of their colleagues. It happens in every profession, and in the world of training as well, we come in contact with a few instructional designers, trainers, training managers or team managers who well...are not good. It's important for organizations to choose the best people in the training field in order to get the most out of their employees.

Choosing the proper trainer is the first thing to be considered. It's important to note that no matter how well prepared, organized and animated a training session is, employees will recognize and respond accordingly to how the information has been delivered. Thus, a well-prepared, creative and experienced trainer that speaks with an open mind is a must for the success of a training session.

Pain Point 2. Not being able to focus on the quality of education, as the costs seem to be more important for some.

While recognizing that budgets for training are always limited, and have decreased in recent years due to the global economic crisis, business managers need to focus first and foremost on the real value of their investment in training and employee development. It should not be only about dollars and cents, but rather the quality of the training.

Pain Point 3. Having people who feel that they are professionals simply because they know the subject matter is not enough to teach it properly.

See 'Pain Point 1' above. It's not just about mastering the material, or knowing how to perform actions that your employees are not capable of yet. Content is not the only factor here, but rather the strategy, methods and execution of the transfer of that knowledge.

Pain Point 4. The learners are not giving their full attention to the content as they get distracted with other activities such as technological apparel and gadgets.

I've heard this often, but at the same time, this is more the training staff's responsibility. Smartphones and tablets are a reality now in the office, so it's up to the trainers to develop content and training methods that are engaging and motivating for the learners. Get them on their feet, use games, and have them collaborate. See what works.

Pain Point 5. The training program's business value is often not emphasized strongly enough.

In training, one often is faced with the question, 'what's in it for me'? It could be from the learner's side, as it's critical the training is directly relevant to their daily work, and the knowledge gained during the training process is clearly demonstrated to help the employee both in the short and long term. Yet managers themselves often ask the very same question, what's it in for them, i.e. how does the investment in training help their business? It's for them to understand the value in both the short and long term.

Pain Point 6. Training strategy is failing to use proper ways of delivering the content.

Nowadays thanks to the internet and improved technology, it has become much easier to give learners more diversified ways to learning. The training will have more impact if the right tools are chosen and utilized. Besides, the learners are bound to be much more engaged and interested. Whether we are looking at performance support aids, online and mobile learning platforms, or something else, there is the technological ability to transfer (and facilitate) important information to the learner in various ways.

In addition, when you're talking about a specific skill - whether "hard" skills directly related to performing a task or the "soft" skills needed to grow and succeed overall – training managers must realize two things. One, learning should be looked at as a long-term, continuous process, and second, that employees can learn that skill in several different ways. Recognize the different styles of learning, of observation, demonstration, and repetition. Understand that the same skill might be learned differently (and successfully) by different people.

Pain Point 7. A common problem is when people are sent to training sessions which they are not interested in, or do not want.

The issue here is of relevance and simplicity. I've written a lot about [the importance of relevance in employee training](#). The basic idea is to clearly establish the link between what is being taught within the framework of training and the successful performance of daily work. There are several ways to establish relevance, including focusing on practical and real situations, problem solving methods, observation of veteran employees performing those same skills, and more. In addition, it's [important to keep training simple](#).

Pain Point 8. Trainers often overwhelm the learners during training sessions.

It is a known fact that any student will not be able to remember all the lecturer will say during a training session. The amount of information he/she will remember will be even less if he/she gets distracted, or does not feel any willingness to learn. If he/she has been 'sent' to the course, then chances are that he/she will have a certain resistance too. Thus it is important to bear these things in mind and try to be realistic about it. The employees who are attending the course are not recording machines. [It is critical not to overwhelm the learners during training](#). Better to have short sessions, and both during the initial training sessions and beyond, provide short nuggets of information as opposed to large and over-detailed bursts. When it comes to learning, less is often more.

Pain Point 9. The managers need to make it clear to the employees that the course will give them a goal to attain. This is a development program with a mission and not just a one-off lesson.

This pain point I think has two important components to it. First, that training is a long-term process. To use a baseball analogy, it's not a "1st Inning Event", and then the employees go and perform easily, and without errors or growing pains. There has been a shift in recent years away from that idea to more of a continuous learning strategy, one which provides ongoing coaching, in-work performance support, and retraining along the way. The other aspect here is that training should have clear learning objectives. Critical to this is that these objectives should be both specific and measurable. Furthermore, it's best that managers have a way to track employee progress both during training and beyond in order to gauge where there remains room for improvement.

Pain Point 10. Communication is lacking.

As with other facets of life – relationships, team sports, and more – communication is critical to success in employee learning. Employees should be in consistent communication with both trainers and their direct managers, both during and after the training sessions have ended. Both sides should be encouraged to provide their personal feedback to the current state of progress: whether they are truly absorbing the material, would suggest any changes, or are struggling. At the same time, effective and open communication provides an important avenue for conveying expectations of the employee and the goals where he/she needs to reach to be successful.

Pain Point 11. Training is not about fixing people but rather to build on what they are good at and improve it. This is not just about solving problems. It needs to have more to do with improving and creating.

I think this is a good point. It goes beyond saying, 'well optimism is more enjoyable to think about'. It's about what motivates employees. While there is no question that training is there to a certain degree to reduce mistakes, and to reduce requests for assistance, if the point is made clearly how much the training will benefit the employees themselves, about how their frustration and confusion levels will go down, and how much more they will enjoy their daily work – that is something very valuable for managers.

Pain Point 12. Training seems to go well, but the employee fails to apply what he/she has learnt in practice.

Again, it's about practicality and relevance. What better way to make employees learn than by integrating some real-to-work projects into the training course? This way, the learners get an actual chance to test what they'll have to do in their daily tasks and to learn how they can overcome the different obstacles which may arise. In this regard, trainers can split the employees into different groups and teams, in order to bond the relationships with them and help them understand the importance of team work. Individual projects are just as important, as long as they have a direct relevance to the learners. That word – relevance – is critical to successful training.

In addition, it's essential for executives to not waste too much time in getting employees to apply the knowledge gained once the training ends. Such approach has few specific benefits. First of all, it enforces the message that employees learned something practical and not just general or "good to know" information. Secondly, it aids managers in assessing the training's results fast. And finally, it allows the learners to get a real grip of the information they learned throughout the preparation sessions. There's no reason to let time pass by, as any gaps should be filled in as quick as possible.

There is also the importance of post-training performance support, which I will get to in a moment.

Pain Point 13. Failure to truly measuring the effectiveness of the training.

So training is moving along, or perhaps has even ended. In business terms, where is the ROI? Yet even if we are not focusing on the financial return on training, how we track employee progress? Given the importance of employee training, there needs to be an easy way to track and manage employees, their progress and other metrics involving training. There are several software options available. You can also read more about how [WalkMe is a great option for monitoring employee progress during and after training](#).

Pain Point 14. The dilemma of having the employees stopping from work so as to attend the course.

This is the "indirect" cost of training. Let's face it. Employees are hired into an organization in order to perform a certain series of tasks. The longer the training process – both the formal initial classroom sessions and the period immediately following training where workers are still not up to full proficiency levels and often are waiting for helpdesk assistance – continues, there is a loss in the potential time spent performing required work. Managers constantly face this dilemma, of realizing there is a need for team members to learn the necessary information in order to work effectively, yet at the same time taking them away from that work. Therefore, a cost-effective way of helping to shorten training times, and help people train as they work, is adopting a long-term performance support strategy. Which leads us to the final pain point.

Pain Point 15. How do we ensure that the employees won't have to retrained shortly after the training ends? How can we get it to really leave a lasting impact?

The fastest and most cost effective way to [shorten the gap between the end of training and the time when employees reach full levels of proficiency and independence](#) is by far through the use of electronic performance support tools, which help employees continue to learn, but without the need to stop their work. Managers should note that these tools are extremely effective in post-course training, as they efficiently strengthen the bond between the knowledge gained during training and the way it can be implemented in the various office activities.

[WalkMe](#) is an excellent example of how performance support technology can help improve performance and raise the long-term impact of training. An interactive online guidance technology, WalkMe is able to deliver learners a valuable performance aid, which gives them simple and easy to understand step-by-step instructions in the exact real-time moment they need to perform a particular task. In the absence of such technology, learners often struggle to figure out how to manage and operate their newly familiar software, whereas technology of this kind can guide them easily and quickly toward their final objective in a much faster way. The employees can then spend less time waiting for helpdesk assistance, and can learn the most effective way possible – immediately and directly relevant to the task they are required to perform.