

Blend Your Training Investment - By J. Ragsdale Hendrie

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The trickle of our alarm during recessionary times soon becomes a veritable rumble. Everything is at risk, as we attempt to advance revenue and cut costs. We see evidence of our wariness across the landscape: development on hold, support departments, like Marketing and Human Resources, punctured, Operating Budgets slashed, projections diminished - everything on hold, under review or just erased. One of the first areas always targeted is Training and Development monies.

We know we have commitments to meet in the Continuing Education of our employees. Certain positions need their certifications, others are in the midst of degree granting Programs, Skills need constant attention, our practices change, and technology is always evolving, and we need to keep au courant. Most of us in Hospitality do not have either the resources or the commitment of a Marriott, although we recognize that our investment shall undergo an extensive challenge and transformation, as the battle for Human Capital intensifies. When you source talent, you must retain and develop that talent. Opportunity for Career Development is a means to accomplish those objectives, and this can be addressed even in a down Economy.

Training has become 'virtual', an awareness that any employee or group can undertake any program, literally anywhere at any time. Training Professionals and enlightened Managers understand the new applications and implications. The 'blend' is the panacea.

Many of us do not need a sophisticated Performance Evaluation system to assess the Training and Development needs of our employees. A given - we need to be more productive, more resilient and adaptive, and certainly more competitive. This stance does not organizationally resonate with just a motivational speech at a department meeting. You need to follow-up and through. Fortunately, the means of training delivery and platforms available have taken a significant surge forward from the old time classroom approach, where we either trained our people on-site or in the locality or sent our people to larger cities. The Internet changed it all and also removed the usual, traditional excuses. Now, we can consider 'blended' Training and Development, where our options are 24/7, at a variety of costs, platforms and schedules.

We understand that Training dollars are limited. We know that time is money and also limited. Everyone has specific needs, learns comparatively through different mediums, and retains that knowledge to various degrees.

The face-to-face, personal exchange is still very important, as shown by conventions, forums, association meetings, and specific training programs. The opportunity for networking, socializing, experiencing advanced products and perhaps learning something new is of great value. But, as associations, meeting planners and host properties and Destinations know, this type of convening shall take a radical tack in the near future, as companies further pull back from this type of expenditure for their Executives, middle management, technicians and staff. Sustainability and economics will dictate, and the familiarly called 'boondoggle' shall become a low priority. Look for scheduled presentations and Workshops to be simulcast with Sponsors and Vendors to have infomercial time and Q&A an on-line interaction. The 'Blend' maybe broadcasted remotely, but the essence is anything but remote.

The 'blend' shall strike the balance. Senior Management can participate in a Webinar in the comfort of their office or Conference Room, digesting specific information to help frame their strategies. Middle Management can also enjoy this type of platform or perhaps interact with a facilitator, hosting a specific discipline or skill based presentation. Staff can watch a CD in the cafeteria, pop it in their workstation computer, or take it home. And, we can always host a meeting for that personal exchange. Travel and down-time is minimized, while Program content and 'take-aways' are maximized.

This is a very exciting time for Training and Development - how we educate our people, advance their knowledge, enhance their skills and invest in their future (and, ours, I might add). The 'Blend' recognizes the constraints of time, money and resources. What is available in the Marketplace is extraordinary. The audience can be thousands, such as the new Q Care program in Oregon, an effective Training tool used for Destination Development. Or, it might be as simple as a Housekeeping-How-To CD for your new employee. Perhaps, the CEO needs the latest on Revenue Management and signs-up for a Webinar. Or, your servers have a new POS system to learn, on-line. Goodbye to the days of raising the hand in the back row. 'Blend' is here!

The author believes that Remarkable Hospitality is the portal to the Memorable Experience. Seek solutions at: www.hospitalityperformance.com

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