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GROWTH GOALS

WHY YOUR OPERATION NEEDS EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

BY LINDSEY THOMPSON

In the human body, atrophy occurs when a person does not use a muscle for a period of time, resulting in limited or lost function.

Atrophy of sorts can also occur in the workplace; when employees aren't working toward goals and continually growing in their roles, they can become complacent and inefficient. Employee development and training programs are crucial to keeping your employees engaged, growing and learning. They also help retain quality employees, improve customer service and add to your operation's bottom line.

Studies show that employees want to grow and develop. Axonify's 2021 Annual Global State of Frontline Work Experience Study found that nearly 20 percent of respondents reported rarely or never receiving additional training, and 36 percent only take part in training during big job changes. Less than half of respondents had access to programs to develop career

advancement skills even though more than one-third had requested it from their employer. According to a study from PwC, 74 percent of workers are ready to learn new skills or retrain to remain employable in the future.

While new employee training is necessary for new staff members to learn the standards in your operation and to be able to fulfill their job duties, additional programs that go beyond introductory training can result in more satisfied and productive employees. Training and development programs show employees you are invested in their careers and you want to see them grow and succeed.

No matter the size of your operation, advanced training and development should become a part of your business strategy. To help you get started, two retailers share five best practices for managing successful employee development and training programs.

TURKSTRA LUMBER

ALWAYS ON THE LEVEL



TOP TRAINING

At **Turkstra Lumber**, training is a part of the company's culture and key to providing top-notch customer service.

Look Outside

Employee Development Programs From Other Industries

Along with looking for best practices from fellow home improvement retailers, it can be beneficial to look outside the industry to see what other businesses are doing for training and development and what principles apply to your operation. Here, we share the basics and takeaways of the employee development programs from three companies outside the home improvement industry.



01

Disney

For over 30 years, the Disney Institute has been helping advise and train a variety of professionals, teams and organizations worldwide based on the business insights and best practices of Disney parks and resorts. The Institute offers a number of programs each year, including Disney's Approach to Employee Engagement, which provides **best practices for fostering an organizational culture, finding talent, training for culture and communicating effectively.**

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Create a culture that appeals to both customers and employees.
- Choose employees based on attitude, not just talent.
- Engage with employees through active listening.

02

Chick-fil-A

Well known for its chicken sandwiches and polite employees, Chick-fil-A takes employee development and training seriously for employees, whether they are working in a restaurant or the corporate office. Each franchisee has the autonomy to adjust the training program from corporate to **best fit their business model and employees and receives support as needed from corporate leadership.** The company also offers the Leadership Development Program, where business leaders travel the country for 24 to 36 months solving real-world leadership challenges and gaining real-life leadership experience.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Train every employee to be a leader.
- Make training comprehensive by teaching the physical and social skills needed for a role.
- Encourage a culture of teamwork and cooperation.

03

Marriott International

For over 90 years, Marriott International has been serving travelers around the world and has done so thanks to a robust training program for employees at all levels of the company. The company provides 15 minutes of training in job-specific skills every day for its hourly employees and offers over 20 management training programs. Training programs include **hands-on, in-person options, as well as online programs and mentorships** to guide employees through their careers.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Demonstrate the value of participating in training programs.
- Offer different training options for different learning styles.
- Utilize technology to facilitate training.

EDUCATION

Building Leaders

NHPA offers the Foundations of Leadership program to help managers understand key concepts of leadership and personal development. Learn more at [YourNHPA/fol](#).

Employee development and training has been a part of the Turkstra Lumber company culture since its inception. The company opened its first location in Hamilton, Ontario, in 1953 and now operates 11 retail locations and five specialty divisions, employs more than 250 people and has evolved its approach to training over the last six decades.

McCormick Paints has been fulfilling the painting needs for DIYers and contractors in the Mid-Atlantic since 1960. The operation includes 28 stores in three states and Washington, D.C., and caters to architects, designers, painting contractors, commercial and residential builders, property managers and homeowners as a paint manufacturer and retailer.

Focus on employee needs.

About 10 years ago, the leadership team at Turkstra Lumber was looking to improve its existing training programs and launched Turkstra Lumber University (TLU). TLU elevated the company's current training programs, adding a mix of courses that each culminates in a certification similar to a college program, says Matthew Presz, Turkstra Lumber retail sales manager.

Programs under TLU include specific product training, called Build-It-Better, installation training with access to a professional installer designation from major vendors and region-specific safety training and certification.

"The Turkstra family wanted to provide a very safe environment and world-class customer service for our employees and customers," Presz says. "Reaching that level requires many hours of training and education to get it right, but the end result is being able to provide a higher level of customer service. Turkstra Lumber University has allowed us to achieve those goals."

Currently, TLU offers training in six product categories under the Build-It-Better program, including fence and deck; trim;

"Reaching that level requires many hours of training and education to get it right, but the end result is being able to provide a higher level of customer service."

—Matthew Presz, Turkstra Lumber

interior doors and hardware; siding; windows and exterior doors; and garages, sheds, barns and steel.

Matt McCormick, McCormick Paints senior vice president of sales and operations, says McCormick Paints takes a different approach than most larger companies; the management team asks employees what training they want to take part in.

McCormick says the training surveys are done regularly and informally, with management team members talking with managers, assistant managers, drivers and other employees about what they want to learn in training.

Training covers a variety of topics, depending on what the management team hears from the employees about what they want to learn. For example, the human resources team recently asked for training on how to provide better information to employees about benefit packages and how to handle certain specific workplace situations. Training is also led by different instructors, from management team members to subject matter experts to vendor partners.

The training an employee goes through is tailored to the amount of experience they come in with, and the managers decide which specific training modules they need to take.

LIVE LEARNING

The Build-It-Better Program, which offers in-person and hands-on training, is part of Turkstra Lumber University, a dedicated development program at **Turkstra Lumber**.



Designate a training lead.

When it was first conceived, the leadership team at Turkstra Lumber envisioned that TLU would be managed by the human resources team. The program grew and evolved quickly, so the company invested in a full-time training coordinator, by promoting Shari Reaume from within the company. Marianne MacDonald, the health and safety coordinator also joined TLU for new employee orientations and safety training. More recently, Mike Rabjohn, Turkstra Lumber's manager of customer service branch and Build-It-Better training, has been responsible for launching Build-It-Better Course Certifications, part of the overall TLU vision.

"The training role is shared so that we can leverage expertise from multiple parts of the business. It is not an easy role to hire for, which is why we have always promoted internally," Presz says.



**32 percent
of employees said
access to more
training and skill
development would
motivate them to
stay with a company.**

Source: Axonify, 2021 Work Experience Study

EDUCATION

Building Leaders

See how Spectrum Paint uses a management training program to develop leaders in the operation at hardwareretailing.com/spectrum-management.

“People fall through the cracks, but I can help prevent that by overseeing the entire process. Being involved in the process also helps me tailor the training each person needs to do.”

—Drew Denicoff, McCormick Paints

McCormick Paints is made up of several different departments, including manufacturing, retail and sales, so having a designated head of training helps keep the program organized and running efficiently.

Denicoff oversees the training programs for the company, and because he talks with trainees throughout the training process, he says he can get a good feel for if they will be a good fit at the company.

He checks in to see if trainees are taking notes, passing the tests they need to and finding the answers to their questions. He also meets with store and sales managers to see how training is going from their perspective.

“I think it’s very important to have one person orchestrating it, because you’re working among all the different departments. People fall through the cracks, but I can help prevent that by overseeing the entire process,” Denicoff says. “Being involved in the process also helps me tailor the training each person needs to do.”

Denicoff also follows up with employees after they complete training and asks them to provide feedback so he can continually improve and update the training programs.

“And they also know they can come to me with any questions they have after training,” Denicoff says.



TRAINING TIME

McCormick Paints offers different training methods from in-person classes to videos to hands-on training.

5 Tenets for Successful Employee Training

Employee development and training programs are crucial to keeping your employees engaged, growing and learning. They also help retain quality employees, improve customer service and add to your operation's bottom line. Each of these five tenets should be a part of any training process and are easy to implement in any size training or development program, whether you have a dedicated human resources employee overseeing the process or another staff member handling the training process.

01 CLEARLY DEFINED GOALS

Let employees know what they are expected to learn and take away from training. Set realistic goals using the SMART method: choose goals that are **Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-Bound**. Include the purpose or mission of training with the goals, so employees are reminded of the "why" of training.



02 USER-FRIENDLY CHANNELS

Whether online or in-person, make the training easy to follow and engage with. For online training, use the technology your employees have access to or provide the necessary tools they need to complete training. When conducting in-person training, **choose times of the day and week that are convenient for employees**.

03 FREQUENT FEEDBACK

Don't wait until the end of training to let employees know how they're doing; **provide consistent reviews** so they can improve as they go. Feedback could come in the form of quick written assessments, or you could give short quizzes or tests after each section to see how each employee is retaining information and learning the information they need to learn.



04 ENGAGING CONTENT

Even the duller topics can become more engaging with well-written and presented content. Tap into your **marketing staff to help you write compelling training content** or consider hiring a third-party company to create content. Numerous companies also exist that can make your training material interactive with gamification.

05 BUY-IN FROM LEADERSHIP

Good habits and positive company culture starts from the top and trickles down, so involve owners and managers in the training process so **employees can see their leaders are engaged**. If management believes training is important, their team members are more likely to buy-in.



EDUCATION

Advanced Learning

NHPA's Retail Management Certification Program focuses on learning skills to grow store profits in today's changing retail landscape. Learn more at YourNHPA.org/rmcp.



PRO KNOW-HOW

Training at **Turkstra Lumber** gives employees expert-level knowledge in certain product categories.

Incorporate culture into training.

The addition of TLU also fits Turkstra Lumber's culture of investing in their employees and treating each employee as family. The company experiences very little turnover with employees who are proud to have been with Turkstra for 20, 30, 40 years and longer.

"Turkstra University is a boost to morale, people enjoy helping each other earn more money and better help customers, truly everyone wins," Presz says. "Our customers are getting more value by being able to come into our stores and talk to a certified coach, employees are happy because they are learning and earning more and the company continues to grow."

Denicoff admits that training at McCormick Paints is a big investment but crucial to the company's success because it shows employees that they are valuable and important to the company. The training programs have helped with employee retention and recruitment at McCormick Paints, and have helped build a team of effective and efficient leaders

who are invested in the company.

"I know the program has been enormously successful, because our people have gotten up to speed much quicker than they were before," Denicoff says. "They tell us the program is much better, that they're able to sell products that they otherwise wouldn't have."

One reason for the success is an integration of the company's culture into all aspects of any training program. McCormick says the company's mission is customer-centric and the company strives to serve its customers, environment and community with leadership, innovation and constant improvement.

"The first milestone of our company's management-in-training program is to know our company goals and core values. We want participants to understand the why behind our company and the mission of the organization, which gives them a sense of purpose," McCormick says. "When our management team embraces our mission and values, then those principles trickle down throughout the entire organization."



Choose the Right Tools

When the project calls for bagged concrete, the pros turn to Sakrete to get the job done right. That's no small part of why retailers large and small have turned to Sakrete as their preferred concrete brand for over 85 years.

From our signature High-Strength Concrete to specialty repair mixes like Fast-Setting Cement Patcher and resurfacing mixes like Flo-Coat, Sakrete products are built on a commitment to quality, performance and superior support for our dealers and your customers.

In addition to world-class products, Sakrete also invests heavily in the tools, knowledge and resources your team needs to be successful. From national marketing campaigns designed to build brand loyalty to our extensive library of Project Pro Tips "how to" videos created to help every job go right to in-the-store training and merchandising to help your team sell concrete like pros, we're here for our independent partners 24/7/365.

For better products, superior availability and the support your team deserves, it's time to make the switch to Sakrete.

Learn more about the strength of Sakrete at sakrete.com/dealer.

RESOURCES

Stay Safe

NHPA offers a convenient and affordable way to give your employees workplace safety and HR compliance training. Learn more at training.yournhpa.org/store.



ENGAGED EMPLOYEES

The leadership team at **McCormick Paints** has regular conversations with employees to find out what they want to learn.

“These action items provide a way for the employees to retain more information and put into action what they’ve learned.”

**—Matt McCormick,
McCormick Paints**

Provide solid direction.

McCormick says most training sessions end with some type of action item for the employee. The action item could be a quiz or a hands-on activity to show competence and expertise in an area.

“These action items provide a way for the employees to retain more information and put into action what they’ve learned,” he says. “They also give us a way to measure if the training is effective, the employees are learning what they need to learn and we are getting the retention we need from our team.”

One example of an action item comes from the color matching training. After an employee goes through the training, the color services manager goes to the store and gives the employee a task or challenge. If they pass, they move onto a second round of training with another task or challenge, and then they move to a third round. After passing the test for the third round, the employee becomes a color matching expert and receives a certificate.

Training for Tomorrow

3 Outside-the-Box Ways to Develop Your Employees

When it comes to training your employees, there is more than one right way to reach your development goals. Employees learn and absorb information in a variety of ways, and while you may not be able to personalize each training initiative, offering a variety of training options outside of traditional in-person learning allows you to meet the needs of most.



STRETCH ASSIGNMENTS

To develop and train employees for a promotion or higher role, consider using stretch assignments. With these assignments, an employee is given duties beyond their current job role to give them **real-life experience** in a higher position while still under supervision.



ONLINE TRAINING

Some positions require hands-on, in-person training but there are other parts of a job that can be taught through online courses. Offering online training allows an employee to **train from anywhere** and easily fit in training between other job duties. Visit YourNHPA.org/academy to find the right online program for your staff from the North American Hardware and Paint Association.



MENTORSHIPS

Assign employees a more experienced employee as a mentor to walk that employee through training and development. Mentorships **create connections between employees** that strengthen your team and company culture and give employees a stake in your operation's success.

4 Ways to Train Employees More Effectively

NHPA has made training easy for retailers by offering a wide library of online educational resources. Below, discover four best practices for training employees online and some ways managers can be more effective at helping their employees learn.



Be patient with employees under stress.

John Medina, an author and developmental molecular biologist at the Washington School of Medicine, describes how stress affects the way people are able to learn and retain information. Stress, grief in particular, he says, impedes a person's **problem-solving skills and can affect their ability to learn new information.**

There are steps people under stress can take to overcome its effects and thus improve their ability to focus and learn. One significant method, says Medina, is to look for ways to help someone else instead of focusing on yourself and taking time to listen to others. Retailers in the habit of giving back to the community can encourage employees to help, as taking the focus off themselves will strengthen their mental health.

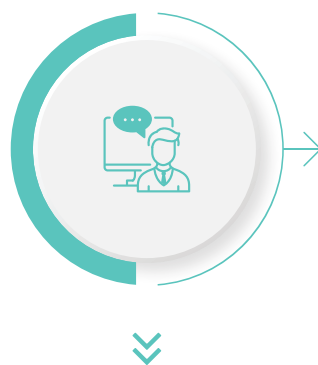


Encourage employees to reach their goals.

Dr. Jennifer Arnold described her journey dealing with a rare type of dwarfism that has required more than 30 orthopedic surgeries. Despite her challenges, she became a medical doctor, television actress and mother. Dr. Arnold said that anyone who wants to reach a goal needs to think big, which means never stop trying, hoping and believing that their goal is possible.

Managers should **encourage employees to pursue their goals in spite of obstacles that might stand in their way.**

Make sure employees understand the many opportunities a job in retail offers. If they express interest in furthering their career at your business, give them the training and encouragement they need to get there.



Engaged employees will stay longer.

One of the learning best practices that has dominated conversations at many conference seminars is the importance of engaging employees. Studies (such as the State of the American Workplace by Gallup) have shown that engaged employees tend to **outperform and stay at a business longer** than those who are not engaged with their job.

One area where employees need to be engaged is in training and development. Allow employees a space for training where they can focus on what they are learning without distractions and help them find the areas that interest them most. Tap into their talents and find the parts of their job that excite them the most and work with them to develop those skills and passions.



Tailor training to meet each employee's skill level.

One of the trends in online learning revolves around the necessity to adapt education curriculum to the needs of each individual learner. Effective training is **efficient, relevant and agile to adapt where needed.**

Employees who take training that is not relevant to them or that covers material they already know may lose interest or feel they are wasting their time.

Make the most of the time you spend training by making sure you address the weak spots in each employee's knowledge. The issues you want to address could include product knowledge, selling skills, add-on selling or compliance. It's also beneficial to offer training in different methods, from online to in-person.



“We can always raise the bar in the industry, and that is exactly what we are doing.”

—Matthew Presz, Turkstra Lumber

Incentivize Employees to Learn

Once a student completes a course in a product category through Turkstra Lumber University, they are considered an expert in that category and earn the designation of coach. Each course completion also comes with an hourly wage premium for that employee.

“If an employee is willing and eager to provide a higher level of service to our customers and advance within the company, we want them to accumulate Build-It-Better product category certifications,” Presz says. “With our hourly wage premiums, our employees are incentivized to master certain product categories, which ultimately provides more value to our customers, and employees in turn earn higher wages.”

All of the courses are voluntary, and employees can take courses whether they are a brand new employee or veteran staff. Turkstra Lumber managers will often recommend employees to participate in TLU if they think the employee would be a good fit for a certain training program, Presz says.

“The sky’s the limit on the number of courses they can take,” he says. “If you’re willing to be an expert and take the time to learn all the different product categories, then you should be compensated accordingly. If you’re a master of six product categories, you’re worth the additional wage we’re paying you.” 🌀



COURSE EVALUATION

Please rate **(Name)** _____ as presenter, and
the presentation, **(Topic)** _____, from 1 to 5
on the following factors, with:

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree.

FACTOR	RATING				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The information provided was valuable.	1	2	3	4	5
The information presented was easy to understand.	1	2	3	4	5
The presenter was knowledgeable of the topic.	1	2	3	4	5
The presenter was knowledgeable of the topic.	1	2	3	4	5
Follow-up information offered through SOI is valuable.	1	2	3	4	5
The presenter modeled the behavior advocated.	1	2	3	4	5
I learned something from the presentation.	1	2	3	4	5
Material presented can enhance my skills.	1	2	3	4	5
Material presented will help me work with prospects/clients.	1	2	3	4	5

GRAND TOTAL

Additional comments:

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Program Title _____

Date _____

Presenter Name _____

Started AM PM

Presentation Location _____

Ended AM PM

Please give an anonymous program evaluation. Rate items by highlighting one number in the columns to the right. **One (1) is a low rating and five (5) is a high rating.**

CONSIDERATIONS	OPINION				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Textbook/Materials					
The text/materials adequately explain the concepts presented.	1	2	3	4	5
The text/materials were appropriate for the subject taught.	1	2	3	4	5
The lessons in the text/materials were too short.	1	2	3	4	5
The text/materials were adequately readable.	1	2	3	4	5
The text/material is applicable to my situation.	1	2	3	4	5
The Presenter					
The presenter provided adequate explanation of textbook/handout materials.	1	2	3	4	5
The presenter gave the program in an easy-to-understand manner.	1	2	3	4	5
The presenter provided adequate examples to illustrate key points.	1	2	3	4	5
The presenter provided ample time for questions and discussion.	1	2	3	4	5
The presenter is interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
The Program					
The program taught me how to apply the information presented to me.	1	2	3	4	5
The program provided ideas on how to handle work-related situations.	1	2	3	4	5
I can adapt the program material to my work situation.	1	2	3	4	5
I learned in the program.	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoyed the program.	1	2	3	4	5
The Audio/Video					
The audio/video gave adequate explanation of the concepts presented.	1	2	3	4	5
The audio/video material presented is applicable to my work situation.	1	2	3	4	5
The audio/video was appropriate for the material being taught.	1	2	3	4	5
The audio/video lessons are too short.	1	2	3	4	5
The audio/video is understandable.	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, I rate the program as:	1	2	3	4	5

EMPLOYEE EVALUATION

For each of the statements below, please circle the number that best represents your response. When making your response, consider your role at this company and your relationship with other employees. When you are finished, total up the numbers circled and write it in the space for the Grand Total.

STATEMENT	AGREEMENT LEVEL				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Company Culture					
I understand the strengths I bring to the company.	1	2	3	4	5
I understand the areas where I need to improve as an employee.	1	2	3	4	5
My job is a good fit for me.	1	2	3	4	5
I would recommend friends and family take a job at this company.	1	2	3	4	5
I understand ways I can develop new skills in this job.	1	2	3	4	5

Communication Skills					
I am a good team player.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel I can talk through and resolve conflict with other employees.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel comfortable talking to my co-workers about what we need to accomplish in our jobs.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel comfortable sharing my thoughts, concerns and opinions with my manager.	1	2	3	4	5

GRAND TOTAL

Additional comments:



RETAIL MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Make a difference today—and tomorrow.

NHPA's Retail Management Certification Program was built for owners and managers in the home improvement industry. The program focuses on learning skills to grow store sales and profits in today's changing retail landscape.

The power of this program is its impact on the performance of participating companies. Course curriculum includes 25 modules covering all aspects of running a business, and its industry-specific nature allows the learning to be immediately applied to the business.

Length: **6 months**

Format: **3 in-person visits with intersession assignments**

Outcomes: **ROI-focused business improvement projects**

Application deadline: **June 1, 2022**

Starting date: **July 2022**

Scholarships available: **20+**

Visit YourNHPA.org/rmcp to apply, download the full learning guide or learn more.

These companies are advocating for independent retailers by supporting this program.





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