Creating an IT training plan

Small business owners need to balance many demands on their time, and training often comes bottom on the list of things to do. We will show you how to build a cost effective IT training plan, making sure it fits your business objectives.

How to create a cost effective IT training plan

Small business owners need to balance many demands on their time, and training either for themselves or their team members often falls a long way down the list of things to do. In this project we show you how to build a cost effective IT training plan, making sure it fits your business objectives.

By building an IT training plan you will save money by focusing your time and effort on the right courses at the right time.

Training courses can cost a lot of money and take you away from the business for considerable lengths of time. If you want more information on the type of IT training available then take a look at the Getting good IT training Guide.

Why bother planning your IT training?

It is perfectly possible to take your IT training whenever you have a free moment in your diary or, more likely, not bother taking any at all. The chances are you will be so engrossed in the business that training will not appear on your list of things to do and you will continue to muddle through.

IT training should be seen as an investment in you and your team much like any other business investment such as new computers, new furniture or new delivery vans. These purchases all need to be planned and factored into the business cash flow, as well as proving a return on the investment by building a better office environment or helping people become more efficient.

Pre-planning IT training will enable you to buy courses smarter by purchasing in advance and taking advantage of “early bird” discounts offered by many training providers.

How to plan your IT training

Everything we do in a small business must have a benefit and provide a return on the investment. Therefore the best place to start working through your plan is to think about your business over the coming year or so and consider what you are trying to achieve. No doubt you will be trying to gain new customers, develop new products and possibly start to recruit new members of staff. Against this background there are a list of roles and responsibilities that you and your team will fulfil. If you are working alone think about how you work and the various roles that you personally fulfil.

Try and map these roles against some objectives – such as growing a customer base by 10% or delivering 25% more products and then consider how IT can help facilitate these objectives.

Maybe you need to improve your financial systems so that cash flow projections can be forecast with better precision, maybe you need to improve your presentation skills using slides when pitching for new business.

This enables you to see what your IT skills are currently and where you wish to go. This is called a skills gap analysis or sometimes a Training Needs Analysis (TNA). Here is an example of a basic TNA:

Role - Finance

Objective - To manage all financial tasks and ensure the business is cash flow positive

Skills Gap - Unable to use a spreadsheet effectively

Training required - 3 day introduction to spreadsheet course followed up in 6 months with an advanced course for 5 days

Outcome - Cash management and forecasting improved by 15%

Role – Sales

Objective - To win more business by producing better presentations

Skills Gap - Poor skills in presentation software

Training Required - 3 day introduction to a presentation software package

Outcome - 25% more new business won

Role - Marketing

Objective - To produce better quality customer newsletters

Skills Gap - Unable to use a basic desktop publishing product

Training Required - 2 days introduction to desk top publishing

Outcome - Newsletter subscriptions up by 20%

It is vital that you are honest with yourself and your team, if you employ anyone. There should be an open discussion about the skills you do or do not have to enable this planning to be carried out efficiently.

To assist you with analysing your skills gap you may wish to look at these web sites:

HP EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

EDEXCEL

E-SKILLS PASSPORT

The IT training plan and the future

The IT training plan should not be a one off process that is then quietly forgotten about. It should be reviewed every 6 – 12 months to make sure it is current and you and the team are up to speed on new products or technologies to help your business. As you grow your business you may start to introduce individual objectives for team members. One of these should be training related. In fact many larger businesses allocate a training budget to staff in the form of training days or money that can be spent on pre-approved courses. This may be something you could eventually aspire to.

Further information

For further information on this topic, why not take a look at this video:

Effective IT planning

What next?

For further access to information and advice on using ICT in your business, contact Business Link by:

- emailing: myict@businesslinkwm.co.uk
- calling: 0845 113 1234
- visiting: www.businesslinkwm.co.uk

Alternatively, click here and complete a simple form to request a call back from a Business Link Adviser.

Commercial suppliers

We do not recommend specific products or suppliers; instead we provide you with a representative sample which covers the range of suppliers/products available. You may choose to look at these suppliers or products but this is entirely at your discretion.