Can't find the time to train? Make it easy and quick and it will become a regular habit

Is it possible for you to have an effective, ongoing training program? I think it is. But your staff must realize they need it, and the way to engage people is to discuss their issues.

When I ask contractors why their training is never accomplished, they say:

"We've tried to train before, but who's got the time?"

"We want to develop our people, but we're so understaffed we have to produce."

"Where do we start? Our new hires can't even fill out an invoice and our veterans have done it for years."

Get started, even in May
Start by asking your staff what they need. Ask what they'd like to learn and when they want to learn it. Then, find your teachers. You could teach, but resist the impulse. Enlist the real teachers in your organization — your field supervisors and managers who have up-to-date information. In fact, involve everyone. All they want from you is a format and a small assignment so they can feel confident.

Keep it simple and quick
People want to learn while doing in small, digestible amounts. Don't hold any all-day marathons. After four hours, most people are on cruise control. It must be quick, informative and regular. Here is the format we use in the Skills Development Series (see sidebar):

- Short sessions to involve people, like talking about positive development.
- Discuss and engage them in the topic. Ask for examples they've seen.
- Deliver the lesson (8 to 10 minutes).
- Give them an activity to make your point, like a hands-on demonstration.
- Have them repeat what they've learned. Pass along an inspiring thought.
- Remind them of next week's session (make this regular, remember?).

Ongoing training will create your organization's future. Just devote a small percent of your time to ensure your organization will be competitive in the future. LM