

# Get out of your employees' way

**Turn your training over to your troops and watch them teach you a thing or two about learning together**

BY PHIL FOGARTY

**D**oes the conversation in your shop go like this: "I know we should be doing more training, but I just don't have the time to do it on a regular basis." Is this an impossible problem? No. Maybe you shouldn't do it.

Why is it that we as owners and general managers think that everything must be done our way for our companies to succeed? Of course, we might not have gotten where we are today if we didn't have a pretty healthy sense of self and a good shot of ego. But let's face it — we didn't invent this industry.

With all the training resources out there, all you may need to do is give good employees some of your time, encouragement and make them aware of your goals. The goals must be clear cut and attainable. Then, let your employees design and execute an effective training program. Based on my experience, I can say that what your better employees devise will be at least as good as what you would come up with — if you give them the right guidelines.

## **Get out of their way!**

If there's anything that the Skills Development Series has taught us, it's to turn training over to the troops — today. It's a liberating moment for everyone in your organization. Your employees already know what they need to know and the last thing they need is for you to tell them what they don't know (and that some day

you will tell them — but now, just get out there and work until further notice).

Get out of the way and watch those people teach you a thing or two about learning together.

## **Cover the bases**

Here are a few steps to make sure the program succeeds when you delegate it:



**An in-house facilitator like this one is just the right person to delegate training responsibility among fellow employees.**



One of the facilitator's key jobs is to get everyone involved by coaching and encouraging everyone to own the program.

► Assign an in-house facilitator to take on this cause. Pick someone who can get enthusiastic about training. It could be a key manager or an employee with potential who needs to be demonstrated. It's even a

great slot for a part-timer who can focus on teaching, teaching, teaching.

► Make sure the facilitator understands the value of getting others involved. He or she shouldn't be doing all training, or even half of it. The facilitator's job is to coach and encourage everyone to own the program.

► Make it flexible like Gerry Grossi's fine group did at Arborlawn in Lansing,

MI. Grossi's Spartan Irrigation runs its program simultaneously with Arborlawn's sessions. They customize and adapt but use the same format and information, and they do it at different locations.

► Mold it around schedules, if at all possible. Mountaineer Lawncare in Morgantown, WV, has sessions in the field (at lunch) for crews who must contend with long drives at rush hour.

► Become a spectator and cheerleader. Cullen Walker of WLM Work-A-Holics Landscape Management in Naples, FL, built bleachers for training and sits in a different spot each week so he can learn along with everyone. He may be doing the wave, as well!

► Promote the cause when it's your turn to teach. When you get to be the one up front, spend some of your "mike" time acknowledging the progress and reminding your team how important this program is to you and to the future of the company. **LM**

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