

Training your employees is the surest route to developing a highly-competent, highly-motivated and loyal selling machine. Online training combines the best resources and learning experience with 24/7 convenience.



FIVE BENEFITS OF ONLINE TRAINING

WANT THE BEST, MOST LOYAL EMPLOYEES ANYWHERE? TRAIN THEM.

Training is the easiest thing to put off when there are other business issues that seem more important. When faced with the need to train a new person, the most common method is to have them tag along with a long-term employee and hope that person knows their stuff.

Other common types of training for front line sales people (inside, outside and counter sales) include giving employees manufacturer's literature to review, sending people to conferences, arranging classes and encouraging self-study. However, these methods may not be the most effective for your needs.

Believe it or not, training is a valuable part of your marketing communications efforts. Companies that invest in training have better customer service, positive reputations and increased sales. At Sonnhalter, we partner with BlueVolt, a reputable online training provider to help our clients round out their communication efforts with a well-trained

staff. Working with an online training provider that specializes in learning experiences with a variety of methods, and understands the supplier-distributor selling model can offer benefits beyond just helping get employees started.

HAVING THE BEST PEOPLE

"Distributors that have strategies for training seem to have the best people because they hire based on important core competencies," said Lisa Bordeaux, director of sales and business development at BlueVolt. "You can train your people for product knowledge instead of trying to find someone who knows the industry but doesn't possess the characteristics that you need."

Online training can be tailored to the needs of the employee. "Lunch and learn" sessions can be too basic for seasoned team members but too advanced for newer employees. Tailoring training to different skill sets helps each team member learn what they need to know and can shorten the time it takes to become capable.



“DISTRIBUTORS THAT HAVE STRATEGIES FOR TRAINING SEEM TO HAVE THE BEST PEOPLE BECAUSE THEY HIRE BASED ON IMPORTANT CORE COMPETENCIES.” — LISA BORDEAUX, BLUEVOLT

USING TIME BETTER

Online training improves the return on your time investment in training in multiple ways. First, it eliminates the need for travel to on-site training, saving both the instructor and employees time. Online training also provides the ability to train hundreds of people at one time through both live and recorded webcasts or online courses.

Online training also helps make use of non-peak time with the ability to complete some training as time permits. “Most people have 10 minutes in the afternoon to learn something. Usually, people will spend those 10 minutes browsing a supplier site for product information,” said Bordeaux. “By bringing all of the product information into one place and putting incentives on it, like we do, those 10 minutes can be spent becoming better sellers.”

MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES

Not only does online training help a distributor's staff become comfortable with the products it stocks, it motivates them to learn and improve for long-term personal goals such as promotions, raises and bonuses. Short-term incentives give an extra boost to the process.

Many of Sonnhalter's manufacturing clients offer online training programs to distributor personnel. Wright Tool, a manufacturer of hand tools, established Wright Tool University for online training. Wright Tool's incentivized BlueVolt program, using \$BlueBucks, helps distributors more easily begin carrying the Wright Tool line and encourages their sales staff to learn the product line quickly.

The BlueVolt \$BlueBucks program provides an extra incentive for employees to complete training and certifications by letting them earn \$BlueBucks that can be redeemed for gift certificates to stores or restaurants.

GIVING CUSTOMERS A BETTER VALUE

Consistent training of all employees ensures that your entire team can easily assist your customers. Whether a customer speaks with your most seasoned team member or ends up with the new guy, they'll get a competent person with solid knowledge.

“Of employees who participated in online training through BlueVolt, 89 percent said that they are able

to give their customers better service as a result of the training they received,” said Bordeaux.

Feeling comfortable with products through the knowledge that online training provides makes it easier for your staff to recommend them and answer customer questions. Online training also makes it possible for your staff to have the same training and information to convey to customers, strengthening your distributor reputation.

INCREASING SALES

Good training helps salespeople feel comfortable recommending products. Sales forces with product training and certification are not only knowledgeable, they are also loyal to their brand.

“People sell what they know, 81 percent of employees who did training with BlueVolt reported that they sell more as a result of the training,” added Bordeaux. “In our customers' experience, online training is one of the most significant things they did for their bottom line. Trained people are outpacing industry averages.” **CS**

BlueVolt's Learning Management System provides customized training programs for distributors, manufacturers and associations. Contact BlueVolt at www.BlueVolt.com or call 503-223-2583.

Established in 1976, Sonnhalter is the leading B2T marketing communications firm to companies that target professional tradesmen in the construction, industrial and MRO markets. Vision architect Matt Sonnhalter has more than 17 years of consumer and business-to-business experience including product launches, brand positioning and development of marketing plans. Learn more at www.Sonnhalter.com or via the blog at www.TradesmenInsights.com.



“CONSISTENT TRAINING OF ALL EMPLOYEES ENSURES THAT YOUR ENTIRE TEAM CAN EASILY ASSIST YOUR CUSTOMERS.”

— MATT SONNHALTER