

Training is key

Businesses can't overlook the next generation of leaders.

Corporate training programs are a key component of any successful business.

"It is always important to develop a culture of training and knowledge sharing," says Frank Pedicini of Skoda, Minotti & Co., a five-year-old accounting and financial services firm that employs 130 people. "Having a lot of highly skilled people in particular areas is great, but you want to transfer that knowledge throughout the organization."

Smart Business spoke with Pedicini about the value of training and its effect on the level of service that a company can provide.

What goals should a company try to achieve with its training programs?

The goal of any training program should focus on finding new and different ways to help your clients grow. In order to accomplish this, training programs should not only focus on technical training, but also training staff in areas that will allow them to help a firm's clients take their businesses to the next level.

For an accounting firm, keeping staff up to date on the current tax laws, accounting rules and technology is always a priority. For example, a client can be saved hundreds of thousands of dollars by taking advantage of little-known tax law changes that even the largest national firms have missed. Also, some of the computer applications available today have tremendous potential to help a business be more productive, but without proper training, often times clients are just scratching the surface of what can be accomplished with that particular application.

Why do you feel training and education are so important in today's business climate?

The body of knowledge in the business world is currently larger than it ever has been before and expanding each and every



Frank Pedicini
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day. Constant training and education are essential to keep up with this rapidly changing climate.

As our world becomes more global and complex with more and more businesses operating nationally and internationally, it's important that a company's staff be exposed to the potential issues that may arise in any given client situation.

Do you feel employee training can have a significant effect on the level of service a firm's clients receive?

Absolutely. When staffers are trained in the nuances of their clients' businesses, clients will see those results in the bottom line.

There could be a situation where an accounting firm is performing an audit for a client and a member of the engagement team identifies an area where the client may have another issue such as a banking arrangement or a technological concern.

A well-rounded and knowledgeable staff can always improve client service by providing this type of value-added service. These types of solutions help clients grow their own businesses in areas they may not have identified before.

What are some techniques and programs that can be implemented to improve employee education?

Assigning an employee development director is a key step in the employee education process. This person is charged with developing employee career plans and leading employee education efforts. Having a leader in this area is important and will allow the firm to branch out beyond traditional training courses.

Also, be sure to use all of the resources currently at your disposal through networks and alliances of which your firm may currently be a member. For instance, accounting firms have access to alliances such as the BDO Seidman Alliance, which is an association of more than 200 firms in 360 locations across the United States and 600 firms in 99 countries globally. By joining such an alliance, a firm not only has access to its vast resources and technical expertise, but also its incredible network of training resources.

How can a training program shape the future of a business?

One area many businesses overlook is the next generation of leaders. This can be addressed through leadership training, which is important for staff members at all levels of the organization. By developing leaders internally, in part through continued employee education, the future of the organization becomes increasingly secure.

Education goals should not just be technical and technological, but must also include communication and managerial skills as well. In order to groom the leaders of tomorrow, employee education needs to focus on both personal and professional growth.

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