

CREATING A TRAINING TEAM OF VENDORS

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Given the time constraints that all business people work within and the numerous responsibilities trainers take on on a daily basis, it is important to find reliable vendor's that you can call upon in order to provide quality service to your internal customers. I am using the term "vendor" in a broad sense to include any product or service for which you might contract. There are number of type of vendors that will be useful resources for you at one time or another. The list includes, but is not limited to:

- Graphic designer
- Researcher
- Web developer
- PowerPoint expert
- Instructional designer
- Trainer / facilitator
- Printer
- Off-the-shelf content vendor
- Train the trainer content vendor
- Public seminar company

It's a good idea to meet potential vendors and understand the level of service that they can provide, *prior* to needing them. This will reduce the stress level when you absolutely need a vendor, and will increase the chances of selecting a quality provider, through an advance, impartial analysis. You want to feel comfortable with the vendor or individual because you will be relying on them to make you shine in the eyes of the rest of the organization. Depending on the timeframe or intensity of your project, you will oftentimes find yourself working very long hours in close association with your vendors; you'll want to be completely at ease with your choices.

Graphic Designer

As the saying goes: a picture is worth a thousand words. A graphic designer can take basic ideas and make them into visuals which your audience can more easily remember. When you are custom designing training, think about using the services of a graphic designer in order to make your training materials look as professional as possible, as well as to make your message easily understood.

Researcher

A researcher is invaluable for searching out and collecting data which will make your training more accurate. A researcher can discover how many accidents per year happen in warehouses within the lumber industry or how much rework costs the semiconductor industry each year.

Web Developer

Although web-programming can be relatively easy to learn; it is quite time-consuming and is better assigned to someone with that specific skill. Without even considering the complexities of eLearning, if you are posting handouts, PowerPoint slide sets, or other training materials on the web, a Web developer will be invaluable to you – not only

because your work will look professional but also because of the hours you'll save by not doing this relatively administrative task yourself.

PowerPoint Expert

A PowerPoint expert can help you to create classroom visuals with impact. The rewards of using a PowerPoint expert are similar to that of using a Web developer; even if you are proficient at PowerPoint, creating your own slides can be time-consuming and adds little value to your role or to the organization. Paying someone who is an expert with the software is a wise investment – both financially and mentally.

Instructional Designer

Instructional design is a labor-intensive process that requires long stretches of uninterrupted “thinking” time – something that is rarely afforded an in-house trainer. An instructional design expert will be able to take virtually any topic in any industry and create a learning process (course, video, self-study program, etc.) for it. Typically, when you hire an instructional designer it is a “work for hire” arrangement which means that your company owns all rights to the material that was created. This type of arrangement allows you to design custom training materials that you have unlimited use of and to get them out into the field quickly.

Trainer / Facilitator

The actual delivery of training is also a labor intensive activity which may or may not require you, personally. If the training topic is one that you are an expert at, and for which you have credibility within the organization, you will probably be the best person to be the trainer. However, many topics can be effectively delivered by a skilled trainer/facilitator with no experience in the topic. In some instances, you may contract with a trainer that has his/her own program on a particular topic, in which case you are purchasing “the whole package” from one entity; in other cases you may simply hire a trainer to deliver training which you have purchased from another vendor, or created in-house.

Outsourcing the delivery of your training courses is frequently a wise decision when you consider the number of hours that the delivery of training will take you out of your office and away from achieving the other roles you are responsible for.

Printer

The copying, collating, and binding of your training materials is an administrative task that adds *no* value to your role in the organization. Finding a reliable and economical printer will relieve you of a tedious and never-ending task. Many printers will also store your documents on their servers for future use and ship your documents to their final destination point.

Off-the-Shelf Training Product Vendor

There are many training programs which are generic enough that you can purchase them off-the-shelf for use within your organization. Rather than searching out topic-specific vendors each time you need a training program, find a broker who is conversant in many topics and represents many training vendors. Often one phone call to a training

broker, which provides them with a basic idea of what your training need is - such as Clean Room Safety or the legal issues surrounding the ADA – is all that you will need to do; the broker will search out the best resources for you and suggest a short list of possible vendors. Professional associations that represent your trade are also a good source of pre-packaged training materials that apply to your industry and the jobs within it.

Train the Trainer Content Vendor

One of the ways to maximize your training department's reach is to use other resources within your organization, such as managers and subject matter experts, as de-facto trainers. Subject matter experts are best used when topics are technical or specific to a role. It is more expedient to use someone who is well-versed in the topic than to learn the topic yourself so that you can then become the trainer. Managers are best used as trainers for topics of a managerial nature, such as leadership or ethics, and when your training would be assisted by the credibility or authority of such an individual. You may find that you would like these individuals to have basic "trainer knowledge" which is available through Train-the-Trainer (also known as T3) programs. These programs will teach new trainers the importance of projecting their voice, using audiovisuals effectively, asking and answering questions from the audience, and other skills that are useful to someone who will be conducting a training session.

Public Seminar Company

Many generic topics are offered through public seminar companies which produce full-day to multi-day training programs in major cities throughout the United States. Topics are generic since the seminars are open to the public and there is no telling what types of industries will be represented in the audience. Topics range from time management to basic supervisory skills, project management, computer skills and more. These types of vendors are useful when you have one or two individuals within your company who need specific skills training.

Conclusion

It's possible to offer a robust array of training to your employee workforce through the use of vendors, consultants, and providers of training related products and services. Be sure to seek out these services out before you find you need them.

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For more information on this topic and additional questions to ask, refer to **The Accidental Trainer: A Reference Manual for the Small, Part-Time, or One-Person Training Department**, Pfeiffer, ISBN 0-7879-8046-3