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# Warning: Don't Be a Victim of "Drive-by-Training"

By Monica Wofford



Paul entered the classroom. He'd been here a dozen times and this was another "mandatory" course, requiring his attendance, but not his enthusiasm or participation. Surely they didn't expect serious interest in this campaign of the month on employee morale and flying fish. It was just as bad last year, when HR handed out mice and talked of cheese. It was yet another "Drive-by-Training" event that lasted about a month and Paul didn't think this campaign had even that much staying power. It was all so silly to him when employees were under paid and in need of professional development, not fluffy fun and games.

It all started when the CEO noticed a slip in the sales numbers. There had been many "pump-'em-up" meetings about maintaining morale and increasing sales. The company's new focus was on keeping everyone in good spirits and ignoring the fact that most of the employees were ill equipped to handle the impending industry changes. With an ample budget remaining until year's end, the CEO was now turning his attention to training for help; the mandatory one time class that Paul was walking into that he and others knew wasn't going to change a thing.

It's not uncommon and it's not effective. "Drive-by-Training" happens in respectable companies daily and often skilled trainers are leading the charge, but for what end result? We all know the old adage that "when budgets get cut, training gets cut" and yet believe that we have no

professional responsibility for the proliferation of such dire consequences. There is a solution: don't be victims or advocates of "Drive-by-Training." We've all seen it: the one-time campaign, the one-time class, and the training event that is sold as a solution. It is easier to sell, but it loses its appeal quickly and makes it more difficult to earn repeat business, for all trainers. Instead, sell results that you can prove, that you can measure and that you can guarantee. Horrors! Yet, here's how you can.

## **Educate the client on the problem AND the solution.**

Clients know what they want and usually don't know how to get it. We've had clients ask us for leadership training, when the real issue was the twelve management levels they maintained. We've had clients ask us for customer service training when the real issue was one leader who failed to share expectations, coaching, or consequences. We've all had them and so many say "okay" to training requests that will not solve the problem. They are "drive-bys." Go back to Mager and Pipe, re-read the training definition, explore the book "What Every Manager Should Know About Training"; educate yourself and the client. What they want is a solution to the problem, not a Kleenex to clog a fire hose. What they know to ask for is training because they think that's the solution and if we don't know any better, what kind of service are we really providing?

## **Become a valuable resource**

Participate in the business conversations that divulge what keeps senior management up at night. This may mean that you have to assert yourself or ask to participate. This may mean that you boost your own knowledge, even your own confidence, believing that you belong in those meetings. If you're a valuable business resource, you do! Ask more questions at first than provide answers. When asked or directed to urgently create or deliver a training program, ask what knowledge and skill is missing? Is it a

motivational problem that stems from lacking rewards or is it a true training need? Have employees forgotten how to perform leadership or are they struggling with a culture that only supports dictatorial commanders? Then in your most professional style, share with the client that you would be happy to provide the training and these are the result likely to follow. Continue the conversation, share other solutions that have even more value and why. Remember their business is to make revenue, not invest in more kinesthetic trainer toys. Yet, when you address the needs of the business first, your insight will likely gain you the freedom to peruse and purchase from The Trainer's Warehouse.

## **Respect the process and follow it**

Different companies have different cultures and the more you understand how they work and what their process is, the more valuable you and your services become. Do your research. Ask questions and learn to respect the process they follow. Understand that if the model is "one-day training events change the world," it will take many conversations and many examples or small steps to change that concept. Your goal should be to solve the problem through training, if there is a training problem, not to collect a check for a one time event and move to the next one. We've been working with one client who wanted quick and simple leadership training. Through education and true consultation on their business needs, we now have a long-term client who has asked us to build 32 modules of training and work with multiple divisions in the organization. It took almost a year to get there. It's a process.

Educate yourself and the client on the true problem. Become a valuable asset to your client and their business. Understand and respect the process of change and of training. Most of us did not learn to deliver curriculum in one day or one week. In addition, many of our clients lack the same passion and excitement for training that we share. It's not their business and it

often makes their interest and their perceived need less immediate. If what they truly need is a shot in the arm, a "Drive-by-Training" event, then knock yourself out, yet if what you want is a long term customer base and significant change in behavior or solutions to their problems, then don't let them be a victim of "Drive-by-Training." Instead, be a valuable asset they want to have around and compensate

for much longer than one day or one event.

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*Monica Wofford brings more than 17 years of experience as a business consultant, trainer, and speaker to Monica Wofford International, Inc. A sought-after trainer, Wofford leverages scientific research and data to design and deliver*

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