

Train the Trainer

Your Quick-Start Guide to a Top-Notch Training Program



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The time and money you spend training an employee is a small investment considering the high cost of not training. Poorly trained employees provide poor customer service, miss add-on sales and may not stay employed with you very long. Well-trained employees are more productive, sell more, give high customer service and will be more satisfied with their jobs.

5 HOW TO SET UP A TRAINING PROGRAM

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To help you build your training plan, NHPA has easy-to-use, online courses designed to give your employees a solid foundation for delivering great customer service. Here, we describe the resources we have and how you can use them.

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This section will provide downloadable tools you can use as you develop your training program. Some of them are customizable for your store's use.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Do you wish your employees could sell more stuff and create loyal customers who drive past the big-box store to shop with you? Do you want employees who will stay employed at your store for a long time?

One of the best ways to get employees more engaged in your business is to provide the proper training, not only in product knowledge but also in all of the retail skills they need to be successful on the salesfloor. If you've never set up a formal training program, now's the time to start. A proper training program begins with the employee's first day on the job and doesn't stop until their last day.

This booklet will give you, the trainer, the knowledge you need to start a formal training program or to make your existing program better. With easy to read instructions, this "Train the Trainer" guide is designed to help you accomplish your training goals. It will also share real examples of how retailers with all sizes of businesses have developed training plans for their companies. This guide is ideal for first-time trainers who need to understand what it takes to set up a successful program. It's also for veteran trainers who need fresh ideas to ensure they're getting the most out of their current program.

After reviewing everything this booklet has to offer, check out the additional resources available at NHPA.org/training. Then be sure your membership with the North American Hardware and Paint Association (NHPA) is up to date so you can take advantage of all of the training resources NHPA has to offer.

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1. Not Training? It Will Cost You.

According to NHPA's *2017 Employee Compensation Report*, about 50 percent of retailers had a formal employee training program. Those who do not have a formal training program often are unwilling to commit money or time to training. However, the cost of not training is much higher.

Fortunately, training is not a high ticket investment. NHPA has a range of training programs available for the cost of your NHPA membership. You'll also need to pay employees for the time they spend studying. You might even pay for certifications for employees who want to specialize in a certain department.

Whatever dollar amount you spend, realize that poorly trained employees will either mislead customers with incorrect information or not engage them at all. Even if they do manage to close a sale with a customer, they've likely only sold the bare minimum, without suggesting add-on sales to increase the transaction size. When deciding how much time and effort you're going to spend on training, consider the cost of training compared to the cost of not training.

THE HIGH COST OF NOT TRAINING

Low customer service. Poorly trained employees are afraid they won't know the answers to customers' questions. They might avoid customers rather than engage them.

Lost sales. Poorly trained employees are likely to only sell a customer what that customer asked for. They won't know how to suggest add-on sales. Customers may even leave without buying anything if they sense employees don't understand their project. And if they leave, they may not return the next time they need a home improvement item.

Increased shrinkage. Poorly trained employees will not engage customers and be aware of what's happening in the store. That is a perfect

opportunity for shoplifters to do their work. Employees who are not trained may also feel unhappy with their jobs and be more likely to steal from you.

Increased turnover. Poorly trained employees may not think you, the employer, is investing in their future success. They're likely to leave as soon as they get the opportunity. They will also feel overwhelmed because they can't do their jobs properly.

THE BENEFITS OF TRAINING

Higher transaction sizes. Well-trained employees can anticipate the needs of customers working on projects. In addition to suggesting add-on sales, these employees can upsell customers to better products, also resulting in a higher transaction size.

Better customer service. Well-trained employees are confident they can answer customers' questions, so they are not afraid to interact with them. Good customer service means shoplifters will have less of a chance to do their work, reducing your shrinkage.

Higher job satisfaction. Well-trained employees are more likely to enjoy their jobs and keep their jobs longer. If you show you are investing in them by training them to do their jobs, they will want to invest their time and talent into your business.

Higher productivity. Well-trained employees spend less time asking questions and more time selling. They can take care of each customer's needs quickly, creating a more efficient salesfloor.

A safer store. Well-trained employees know how to do their jobs safely, and how to keep the store safe for customers. This reduces an employee's downtime due to an on-the-job injury. An accident-free workplace helps lower your insurance, too.

Benefits of Training:



Higher Transaction Sizes



Better Customer Service



Higher Job Satisfaction



Higher Productivity



A Safer Store

2. How to Set Up a Training Program

The framework for your formal training program will guide all of your training efforts and determine how successful you will be. As you articulate your goals and evaluate who in your company needs training, you should be even more convinced of your need to establish a formal program. While it may be tempting to take a less formal or less organized approach to training, remember that your training will only be as good as what you put into it. An organized approach ensures you don't miss anything and that the process is efficient.

Here are the steps this guide will cover.

1. Establish your goals
2. Appoint a trainer
3. Decide who to train
4. List the required courses
5. Determine the form of training
6. Commit your resources
7. Schedule time for training
8. Evaluate
9. Recognize achievement

1. ESTABLISH YOUR GOALS

Seek out specific goals that are measurable and achievable so you can celebrate those goals when you reach them. Your goals for training will determine what courses you will require and who you will train.

Goals might include:

- Teach specific tasks or skills
- Specific job requirements per the job description
- Address specific weaknesses in the store
- Address specific weaknesses in specific employees

Define the job. Especially if you are onboarding a new employee, make sure you have a job description for the job you are training someone to do.

Define the outcome. Know specifically what you want your employees to be able to do, and give them that information before training starts. This may come in the form of a list of tasks they should be able to perform. This will aid you in the evaluation process.

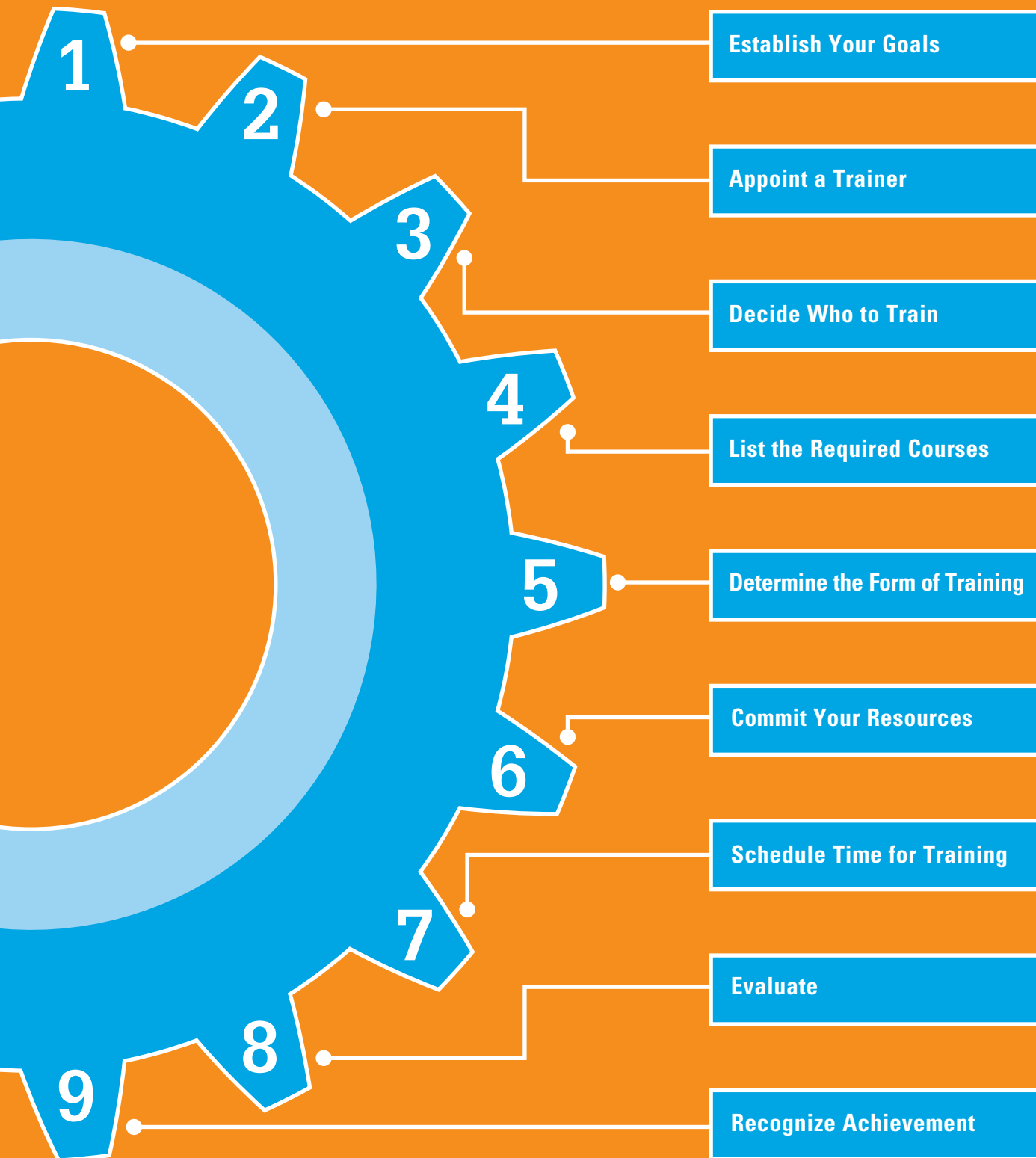
Set a level of achievement. Decide what level of achievement you want each employee to achieve. NHPA, for example, requires students get at least a 70 percent on a test if it is to be considered passing.

Set a timeline. Each goal should include a timeline for when you want the training completed.

Set requirements or incentives. Determine if the training will be mandatory or incentive based. Mandatory training would include training specific to an employee's job description and new employee orientation. Incentive based training might be training that does not directly apply to the employee's job but which could help him become a better salesperson and even advance in the company. Employers often offer an incentive to employees who complete this training because they usually become a more valuable employee.

FOR EXAMPLE: Follow this scenario through the various steps of setting up a training program as an example of how you can address a training need in your store. You've noticed your store has a low average transaction size. According to NHPA's *2018 Cost of Doing Business Study*, a high-profit hardware store has an average transaction size of \$23. Yours hovers around \$17. One of your goals for training is to raise the average transaction size.

9 Steps to Creating a Training Program



2. APPOINT A TRAINER

Since you're reading this guide, this someone is probably you! If you are the store owner with a lot of other responsibilities, consider delegating someone else on your staff to be the trainer so they can give training the attention it deserves. Here are the tasks a trainer will have.

Monitor progress of each employee. It's the trainer's job to keep employees accountable so they don't fall behind. If they miss a training session or need to retake a test, help them schedule a time to do that.

Maintain records of each employee. NHPA makes it easy to monitor progress of each employee with its online tracking program. Each time an employee takes a test, the trainer gets an email notification.

Hold employees accountable. Stick to the training schedule you outlined at the beginning of

your program. Outline the consequences of not completing assigned training tasks. Have a reward or recognition for those that complete the training.

Delegate training or be the trainer. Decide if the person conducting the training will be an on-the-floor mentor, or if you'll assign others for that task.

FOR EXAMPLE: If you do not already have a trainer in place, you may want to ask your management if anyone is interested in taking on the role of trainer for the store. Once you find the appropriate person, set them up as a trainer in NHPA's training database and work with them to establish a schedule of when each employee will be required to finish each section of the course. Look for those managers who are good teachers and are patient with new learners.

3. DECIDE WHO TO TRAIN

More than likely, everyone could use some level of training, so you may want to prioritize where to focus your efforts. Once you've established your goals, decide which employees could benefit. Start by listing everyone in your company according to their training needs.

New employees. They need to learn not only job skills but also all about your company. This is an important time for helping the new hire adjust to a new workplace and feel a part of your team. The way you get this person started will have an impact on how the employee performs in the future.

Veteran employees. They may need a refresher course to learn about new developments in the industry or to make up for deficiencies in skills. Here are some ways you can decide if current employees need training:

- *Look at performance records.* Look at accident reports that might indicate a need for safety training. Look at annual reviews for areas where employees might have requested training but never received it. Harassment complaints against

employees may indicate a need for sensitivity training, for example.

- *Observe.* When you're out on the salesfloor, be aware of how employees might be struggling to perform.
- *Ask them.* An employee's annual review is a great time to talk about where employees would like additional training. Get them involved in the process of what training needs to happen and you'll have greater buy-in from veteran employees.
- *Ask managers.* Managers are likely to know which employees need additional training. They may also have suggestions for who could be cross-trained in multiple departments.

FOR EXAMPLE: With higher transaction sizes on your mind, you begin observing customers shopping in different departments. You overhear employees helping customers with different projects, but don't hear them suggesting many add-on sales that could build the transaction.

4. LIST THE REQUIRED COURSES

Make sure the courses you offer align with the goals you set and the needs of your company. It is also helpful to list the estimated time each course will take. This will help you budget your resources. It will also help employees plan for how much time they should commit to the course. Here are some types of training to consider.

- *New Hire Orientation.* Introduce the employee to everyone in the company, review the history and mission of the store and review store safety. You can find a new-hire checklist in the Appendix.
- *Product knowledge.* Help an employee learn the uses and features of all of the products in your store.
- *Project knowledge.* This training helps an employee learn how to walk a customer through a project. It should also help employees learn to do the project.
- *OSHA/store safety.* This training will help keep both the employees and customers safe. This is a good training topic to review frequently.

- *Sensitivity training.* Sexual harassment and discrimination training may fulfill a legal requirement, but also is a good idea to help prevent problems in the future.
- *Store services.* If the employee is hired to perform a specific service, such as pipe threading, offer the appropriate training.
- *Job-specific training.* There may be specific tasks around the store, such as running a cash register, where you need to offer training.

FOR EXAMPLE: Once you've determined that raising transaction size is a goal for your store, and employees don't seem to be suggesting many add-on sales, particularly when helping customers with projects, it's time to determine how to train employees accordingly. You choose the Project PRO training series from NHPA, as it will help your employees understand the value of selling an entire project as well as give them the knowledge they need to help customers with specific projects.

5. DETERMINE THE FORM OF TRAINING

Take advantage of all of the forms of training available, including online training, classroom training and one-on-one in-store training. Be aware that different employees will have different learning styles. Mixing styles will help different learners. For example, product knowledge can be a mix of online and one-on-one training. Use NHPA's online Basic Training courses to give employees a base level of knowledge, and then send the employee out on the floor with a veteran employee for more advanced knowledge. Remember the four basic steps of training.

- *Tell them.* Explain what you'll cover in the training session and give them the "big picture". Tell them the information you are going to cover.
- *Show them.* Demonstrate what you just told them, going over each step of the process.
- *Let them try.* Let them try the process or demonstrate the skill themselves, or have them

instruct you how to do it. When they make a mistake, help them figure out what they did incorrectly. Deal with one mistake at a time and let them know it's alright to make mistakes.

- *Repeat.* Offer plenty of encouragement.
- *Give them feedback.* If there is a written test that goes along with the material, now is the time to give it. Analyze their learning process and praise every success. Encourage them to ask questions.

FOR EXAMPLE: NHPA's Project PRO courses are available online. However, you would also like each employee to shadow a veteran employee in each department. After employees complete the Exterior Painting section of Project PRO, for example, they will shadow your veteran paint employee for one hour to learn more about the specific products your store carries.

6. COMMIT YOUR RESOURCES

The resources you commit to training consist of the time you allow employees to train as well as the cost of the course. Online courses, such as those offered by NHPA, are cost effective as many employees can train for one low price. Higher-level training courses for managers may cost more. Remember that you cannot expect to reap the benefits of training unless you make the investment.

As you determine what resources, both time and money, you will invest in training, here are some questions to consider.

- How much time will you allow for employees, both new and current? New employees may require more time than existing employees.
- When will you allow that time for training, in relation to all of the other tasks employees have?
- Is training voluntary or mandatory? If training is mandatory, check your state laws, as you

may be required to pay for the time employees spend training. If it's mandatory, carve out time during the workday for them to train.

- What is your training budget?
- Will you offer an incentive for training? If training is voluntary, you may want to offer an incentive for finishing a course. While not necessary, incentives help motivate employees.

FOR EXAMPLE: You decide that all employees must take two Project PRO training courses each week. Since each course lasts approximately 20 minutes, you are committing that each employee will spend approximately 40 minutes of mandatory, paid training time off the salesfloor. In addition, you have already decided that each employee will shadow a veteran employee in each department. If you are not an NHPA member, then budget the membership fee as part of your training expenses.

7. SCHEDULE TIME FOR TRAINING

In a busy retail environment, it's critical you are intentional about making time for training. Plan when, where and how long you expect employees to train. Protect that time from interruptions.

Allow time. Don't let employees figure out when they will do their training. When the store gets busy, they won't be able to take the time unless you give it to them. Each employee will need uninterrupted time away from their normal duties, so put that time into the schedule.

Keep it short. Don't schedule long periods of time for training. Students are likely to retain more during shorter periods of learning. Try to break courses up into 30 minute segments. New employees will have more to do in a short period of time, so break up the day with a short time of online training combined with time spent on the salesfloor with a mentor.

Provide a place. Many retailers find it's best to set aside a quiet place in the store with a computer where employees can do their training.

It should be somewhere where they will not be interrupted and can focus on learning.

Pay them. If training is mandatory, you will need to pay employees for the time they spend training. If you allow employees to do training at home, pay them for the average time it takes to complete the course.

FOR EXAMPLE: Since you've decided all employees must take NHPA's Project Pro series. Since each course lasts approximately 20 minutes, you will allow each employee will spend approximately 40 minutes of mandatory, paid training time off the salesfloor each week, so each employee can take two courses per week. In addition, you have already decided that each employee will shadow a veteran employee in each department. Since mid-afternoon is a slower time of the day in your store, you put training into each employee's schedule during that time each week.

8. EVALUATE

When employees finish a course, review the plan you created and see if it has been effective. Decide how often you will evaluate and build that into your plan. Here are some ways you can evaluate your training:

Ask. Ask your employees about the courses they have taken. Ask about the pace of the learning and if the information was presented in a way they could understand. Do they feel the knowledge they gained will better equip them to do their jobs? Don't forget about the intangibles, too. Employees will likely be more satisfied with their jobs and have a better work ethic if they have the proper training.

Observe. Watch your employees on the salesfloor to see if they are using the knowledge they have learned. What you observe will depend on the subject of the training. For example, if you had training in safety on the job, then has there been a decrease in work-related accidents? Allow enough time for the results to be measureable.

Test. Courses from NHPA allow you to test each employee on the material they have studied and track their scores. For other types of training, you may decide to ask the trainee to demonstrate a skill they've learned, such as cutting a key.

Measure. Third party services, such as a secret shopper service, can provide metrics as to how well employees are providing a certain service. You can also look for sales increases in average transaction sizes, or in specific departments where you might be focusing your training.

FOR EXAMPLE: After employees begin to finish the Project PRO courses, use the capabilities of your POS to begin tracking your average transaction size. If your numbers begin to go up, you may conclude that the training is beginning to pay off. You can also continue to observe your employees and see if you notice more add-on sales happening.

9. RECOGNIZE ACHIEVEMENT

Many employers decide to offer an incentive for completing a course of training. Rewards can be tangible or intangible. Having some type of reward provides incentive for taking the course and shows employees you support their desire to learn, even if it is a mandatory part of their jobs. Here are some examples of how you can recognize achievements and motivate employees.

Give certificates. NHPA provides certificates to anyone who completes the Basic Training in Hardware Retailing with at least a 70 percent grade on each test. There is a similar certificate for those completing the Basic Training in Building Materials Retailing. If you have other levels of achievement you encourage, celebrate that with your own certificate.

Public recognition. Some retailers frame and hang certificates of achievement on the wall so everyone can see. This not only lets other employees know who has completed the course, but it also shows customers that staff have been properly trained to help them. Other ways of publicly recognizing

employees include posting their names in a company newsletter, on Facebook, or by mentioning them in a company meeting.

Offer a one-time bonus. Try offering a bonus in the form of cash or a gift card to the store for those who finish a training program. Some retailers offer a bonus only if the employee scores a certain percentage on a test.

Offer a pay increase. Often, new employees are hired on a probationary status until they complete a pre-determined number of days on the job. You can require new hires to complete a certain amount of training during that probation time as well. When the time is finished, offer a token pay raise (and a permanent job) as an incentive for completing the training.

FOR EXAMPLE: To encourage employees to take their training back to the sales floor, you establish an incentive in the form of a competition. The shift with the highest increase in average transaction size for six months will get a free lunch.

RETAILER EXAMPLES



Instill the Company's Mission

For Tracie Foglia, manager of talent development at HPM, based in Keaau, Hawaii, effective training starts on the employee's first day on the job. For each of the company's more than 270 employees at eight locations, regardless of their position, training must tie back to the company's greater purpose, mission and core values. "The goal of our new hire orientation is for them to get a great sense of who HPM is, who we were, where we are going and how they can make that better," she says. While job-specific training is important later in the process, White is careful to spend time getting them connected with the company culture and touring the company's various facilities. New hires go through a 90-day orientation process, with specific goals at the end of each month. It begins with lunch with the company president during orientation on day one. She stresses the ideas of partnership and collaboration between departments.

That orientation process isn't just for new hires, either. She believes even veteran employees can benefit from a refresher on the company's mission and values. In 2016, she begins a process of re-orienting all employees. "The orientation will be a composition of new hires and seasoned veterans," she says. "The purpose of that is to make everybody feel appreciated, build morale and allow new hires to build networks right away."



How Training Effects the Bottom Line

Peter Walsh at Walsh's Ace Hardware in La Crosse, Wisconsin, believes employees should be an investment rather than just another expense on the balance sheet. Of course, most new employees are an expense because they likely do not completely understand how to do their job. "If we put the proper emphasis on training, and are able to effectively communicate it, we shift the focus so that our staff and management understands that only through training do we make our staff an investment rather than an expense," he says. That also means training is mandatory. "We have tried to instill a sense that training is critical to the continuation of the business. If someone isn't taking advantage of training, they will not be moving upward and will not last." To measure the success of his training program, he looks at a ratio of payroll to sales. If that ratio is aggressive, better than the

industry standard, he draws the connection to training. "We have to be more effective and efficient in what we do, and do it better, consistently, than our competition," he says. He also uses customer feedback to identify areas for improvement in his training program. "We have reviewed and adjusted our training program multiple times from information gathered from customers."



Job Descriptions Guide Training

When James Coté, owner of Osterville House and Garden in Osterville, Mass., created a training manual for his store, he knew it would be important to include the specific responsibilities for each job. "With the manual, it was important that we picked out the basic needs for everyone in the position," he says. "We can't just expect that new employees will know those details." Those job descriptions guide the training process for new hires and help ensure that none of the details get missed.

To evaluate the effectiveness of his training efforts, Coté looks to the numbers. "The best way to check the effectiveness of training is to check sales per customer," he says. "You should be able to see an increase in sales, especially add-on sales." He emphasizes to his employees that add-on selling is more about providing the best service than trying just sell more. "It's making sure the customer gets the right product for the right job."

Veteran employees need training too, so Coté tries to find what they don't know, then challenge them to learn something new. "I informally test their knowledge and try to poke holes in what they think they know," he says. If he finds they don't know the answer to a question, he challenges them to find the answer, and then share it with the group. This keeps his veteran employees learning as well as teaching.



Checklist Shows Progress

Beth Patrick, at Ace Hardware Home Centers in Colorado and Wyoming, has created a "Training Passport" that is a checklist or to-do list for training. Employees who complete the items in the Passport in two months get a \$50 bonus. After that, employees have the opportunity for wage increases at their six-month and annual reviews.

RETAILER EXAMPLES



Incentives Tie Sales to Training

At Dunn Lumber in Bellevue, Washington, Training Manager Luke Partridge breaks training up into several major parts for the company's 350 employees. During the slower winter season, every employee is involved in some type of intensive training at the company's training center. For example, in the popular deck class, students build a complete deck, from the planning process to the add-ons after the deck is built. "To decide the topics for the coming year, we talk with managers from each of our stores, and then build out a schedule for three days of classes a week," he says. "Each employee will spend about half a day training each week."

To provide short bits of training throughout the year, Partridge offers "Take Fives." These are short informational sheets on a specific product, with a quiz attached to it. Topics for the "Take Fives" often evolve around a new product or other item the company wants to highlight.

Partridge also provides an orientation class for new hires every month. Each new hire has access to a tablet computer, where they can access online training such as NHPA's Basic Training Course in Hardware Retailing.

Employees find incentive to train by knowing it will help them sell more. At the end of every year, the company sets aside a portion of its profits for its employees. The percentage of those profits each salesfloor employee receives is based on his or her sales throughout the year. While all employees are eligible for the bonus, the majority of the profits go towards salespeople, since they typically generate the most margin dollars. Training becomes an incentive to move up into a sales position and to learn more about products in the store, which will translate into more sales.



Visual Aids Assist Learning

Mike Kent, assistant manager at Norfolk Hardware in Boston, faces the frequent challenge of training an employee who may not, in the past, have done well in traditional learning environments. He uses insights gained from his

other job—he's also a part-time college professor—to create a learning path that blends printed course material and in-store visual aids.

Kent sets up an area in the store where employees can get hands on with a project. A demonstration may be as simple as letting an employee strip the insulation off a length of electrical cable and bend a wire around a screw on a receptacle. After the store is remodeled, he plans to have a training room where he can set up a variety of projects. "Employees understand much better the add-on sales that go with a project once they've had an opportunity to do the project themselves," he says.

On-the-job training is critical to his training plan, too, but to make it work, he says it's important to schedule a time when the training time won't be interrupted. "We used to just wait for the slow times to have one of the experienced employees train the new hire," he says. But as soon as the trainer and trainee would get together, a customer would come in the door and need assistance. "Now, we create an interference plan so make sure they are not interrupted." If, for example, he wants his employee who's a plumbing expert to take five or ten minutes out of the day to train another employee, he schedules it during a time when he has another employee, who's also knowledgeable in plumbing, available to answer questions.



Three Ways to Evaluate

To evaluate her training, Foglia sends surveys to employees directly following training. "We use surveys to improve areas learners felt could have been stronger, emulate areas of training that were very well developed and received, and to ask how comfortable learners are incorporating training into their daily tasks," she says. To follow up on training in specific areas of product knowledge or selling skills, she measures sales of those areas to see if there are increases. To follow up on customer service training, she uses a secret shopper service as well as a company called ClarityKit, which is a company that calls pro customers and asks specific questions about their customer experience with HPM. Top-rated employees get cash rewards.

3. On-the-Job Training

One common way home improvement retailers train their employees is by having the new hire follow a long-time employee around the store. On-the-job training may seem like a practical and easy way to get employees up to speed. Since most people learn best by doing, on-the-job training should be an important part of your training program. However, if you don't select the proper person for the task, and if the training isn't organized, you'll have mediocre results. Here are some tips to help you get the most out of on-the-job training.

Create a Plan. Some of the biggest myths about on-the-job training are that it's easy because anyone can do it and it doesn't require much planning. However, not just anyone can be an effective teacher. And rather than being a training method that is easy to execute, effective on-the-job training requires careful planning. You need to list the specific tasks the student needs to learn as well as how you are going to evaluate if that training was successful. Approach this type of training with the same type of care with which you would approach group training.

Combine with individual study. Use a two-step learning process helps reinforce the material you're teaching. Have the student study material first online or in print first, then, under the guidance of a mentor, put that knowledge put to use on the salesfloor.

Clarify the tasks you want covered. When walking an employee through a task or when demonstrating a certain set of skills, make a list of everything you need to cover. You don't want to miss anything or get distracted during the training process and forget a critical step.

Explain the why. Begin the training session by telling the trainee what you're going to teach them so they know what to expect. Also tell them the "why" of what you're teaching them so they

can put it into context with everything else they are learning. End the session with a review.

Dedicate time. Allow extra time for doing the task you're demonstrating and get someone else to cover the trainer's duties during that time. Don't view on-the-job training as merely job shadowing. You need to take the time to explain the task and follow the learner's pace, allowing time for questions, and you don't want to be interrupted. Arrange schedules so both the trainer and trainee has someone to cover their duties during the training session.

Choose the trainer carefully. When deciding who will do the training, chose someone with a good attitude and patience. The person must want to be a trainer. A trainer with a poor attitude will negatively affect new hires.

Explain retail lingo. Retail might seem like a foreign language to those that have never worked in it, so pay extra attention to the words you are using. Explain retail lingo as you use it so you don't lose your learner.

Make it hands-on. If applicable, demonstrate first, and then let the trainee try it on his or her own. Most people learn best by doing.

Keep it simple. Always present the basic, best-case scenario for the skill you are teaching. Don't try to explain all of the nuances of the task; you can do that later. Don't overload learners with too much information the first time they try something.

Evaluate along the way. Evaluate as you train so you can determine if the trainee is a good fit for the task. There will always be a learning curve, but sometimes it will be quickly evident that a job is not appropriate for a particular employee. Rather than cause frustration, address the problem quickly and find a solution.

3 Steps to Training on the Job



- What, specifically, will the student learn?
- Who will do the training?
- When will the training happen?

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- Explain why the student needs to learn.
 - Let the student learn by doing.
 - Keep the lesson simple.



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- Can the student complete the task?
 - Is further training necessary?
 - Does the student feel the training was effective?



4. Training Veteran Employees

It's easy to tell a new hire they need to take a training course; it's more difficult to convince long-time employees why they should spend time training, or to get them to take it seriously. But whether it's to learn new skills or refresh old ones, everyone in your store can benefit from ongoing training. Here are some important points to keep in mind when including veteran employees in your training program. They are also important elements that will make any program effective.

Focus on the why. Answer the question "why do I need to learn this," and make the answer relate directly to the employee's job. Veteran employees and adult learners in general, need to understand the benefits of a particular course of training before they buy in to it.

Make it hands-on. Focus on how to help the employee understand the process or skill, rather than simply memorizing a list of steps.

Make it universal. If everyone in the company, even you, is participating in the training, then it doesn't appear that you are singling out certain employees.

Associate. If you are teaching something new, tie the new skill into what the employee already knows. This will make it easier to understand the "why", and put the new skill in the context of the employee's current job responsibilities. Acknowledge the experience they already have and how this new training relates to what they already know.

Use a variety of methods. Different people learn in different ways, so use a variety of methods to present information. The best methods use multiple senses. The lecture method is usually least effective as it is a one-way communication. Always include training that focuses on active engagement.

Understand their reservations. Veteran employees and adult learners in general can get accustomed to a certain way of doing their jobs. Telling them it's time to do things differently or that you want them to learn a new skill can create apprehension and self-doubt. It can be easy for them to wonder why they need new training in a job they've done for many years. It's important for you to approach training as an opportunity for making the business better and perhaps advance their career. If they have deficiencies that require extra training, be honest and fair in your evaluation of them.

Ask for their help. While you may be asking an experienced employee to take further training, recognize the skills they already have. They may have a negative feeling about a request to do further training, so focus on the positive. Recognize their experience, thank them for the good job they've done so far for you, and ask if they would be willing to help train the less experienced employees. When they have an opportunity to be a trainer and they know you recognize their existing set of skills, they may be more likely to engage further training.

Identify the real issue. If an employee's job performance is slipping, don't automatically assume it's a training problem. The employee may need additional skills, but they also may need additional motivation. Carefully examine the employee's working situation to see if there are obstacles that may be hindering the employee's job performance. Is there anything you can fix to make the employee better at their job? Ask these questions to your employee, and be willing to ask the hard questions, if necessary, about the employee's future employment. Additional training will not fix an employee who either does not have the potential or has lost the desire to do a job well.

Get Everyone Involved



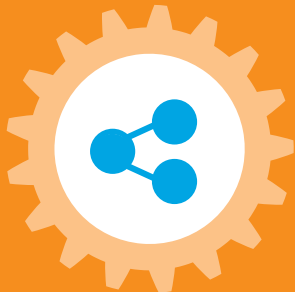
Focus on the Why



Make it Hands-On



Make it Universal



Associate



Use a Variety of Methods

NHPA's Training Resources

These online courses are designed to help both new and seasoned employees gain a better understanding of basic retail practices.

LEVEL 100

“Our Three Pennies of Profit”

Length: 15 minute video

This video gives employees a basic understanding of retail profit and loss. It helps them realize how their actions on the salesfloor directly affect their own success in the business. It includes a test.

Basic Training in Selling Skills

Length: 1 hour

Ideal for new hires as well as veteran employee who need a refresher, this course teaches basic selling skills for delivering top-notch customer service. It covers topics including how to make a good first impression on the customer, how to deal with customer complaints, how to overcome objections and much more. It includes a 50-question test.

Basic Training in Merchandising

Length: 1 hour

Proper merchandising helps a store improve sales, so it is essential that every employee be familiar with best merchandising practices. This course will help employees understand merchandising fundamentals and what they can do to maximize the impact of every display. It includes a 50-question test.

Loss Prevention

Length: 3 courses, each is approximately 45 minutes

Loss Prevention includes three courses covering internal theft prevention, external theft prevention and store safety. It will help retailers develop a safe and secure retail environment. It includes complete testing and record-keeping.

Joining a Retail Team

Length: 30 minutes

The Joining a Retail Team course is designed to help new hires understand the important role they play in the success of your business. Modules cover teamwork, the important role independent retailers play in the community and the importance of customer service. There is a short test at the end to reinforce what students have learned.

Retail Terms

Length: 30 minutes

While terms such as SKU, planogram and turnover may be a part of your everyday vocabulary, they may be intimidating to someone new to the industry. New employees can learn 60 retail terms using a fun and interactive game format.

Basic Training in Hardware Retailing

Length: 8 courses, each is approximately 1 hour

This collection of courses equips employees with the basic product knowledge they need to start selling the eight core hardlines departments. Content includes features and benefits of each product, selling skills (including add-on sales) and frequently asked questions. At the end of each course, there is a 50-question test. Students who complete all eight tests will receive a certificate of completion in their email. Courses include Electrical, Hand Tools, Hardware & Fasteners, Heating & Cooling, Lawn & Garden, Paint & Decorating, Plumbing and Power Tools.

Basic Training in Building Materials Retailing

Length: 8 courses, each is approximately 1 hour

This course covers basic product knowledge in eight core building materials departments. In addition to outlining the products and features of basic products, this course offers selling skills (including add-on sales) and frequently asked questions. At the end of each course, there is a 50-question test. Students who complete all eight tests will receive a certificate of completion in their email. Courses include Lumber, Engineered Wood, Millwork, Windows & Doors, Siding & Roofing, Insulation, Cabinets and Interior Surfaces.

Project PRO

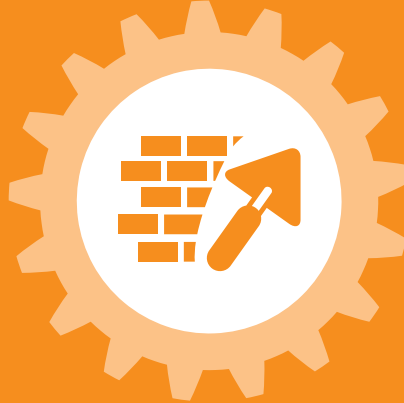
Length: 15 courses, each is approximately 30 minutes

After employees learn basic product knowledge, the next important step is learning how to sell an entire project. Project PRO walks employees through a series of specific projects. Each Project PRO course combines PlanItDIY project videos with valuable selling skills. Emphasis is placed on explaining how selling an entire project, instead of just a single product, can make a big impact on a store's sales. Courses include common DIY projects, including Priming and Painting Interior Walls, Fixing a Leaky Toilet and Installing Electrical Outlets and Switches.

Your Core Curriculum



**BASIC TRAINING:
HARDWARE RETAILING**



**BASIC TRAINING:
BUILDING MATERIALS**



PROJECT PRO COURSES



**OUR THREE PENNIES
OF PROFIT**



LOSS PREVENTION



**SELLING SKILLS/
CUSTOMER RELATIONS**



RETAIL MERCHANDISING



BASIC RETAIL ACCOUNTING



**BASIC INVENTORY
MANAGEMENT**

LEVEL 100

Coatings Specialist (New)

Length: 3-1/2 hours

This course offers an in-depth look at the different types of paints, stains and other coatings for sale in most paint and decorating stores. It also includes a discussion of types of applicators, an introduction to the color wheel and selling skills best practices. Sales associates who take the course will have the skills they need to successfully sell all types of coatings. It includes a final test.

Paint Customer Service Specialist (New)

Length: 70 minutes

This course will prepare sales associates with the customer service skills they need to successfully sell to shoppers looking for paint and decorating products. Topics include basic steps in retail paint sales, add-on selling, dealing with difficult customers and techniques for competing against big-box retailers. It includes a final test.

Learn more about the association, membership and other resources to help your business by visiting **YourNHPA.org** today.

LEVEL 200

Basic Inventory Management

Length: 1 hour

The course in Basic Inventory Management is an introduction to the basic concepts and best practices of managing inventory in a home improvement retail operation. In seven modules, the course outlines the components of the inventory cycle, including ordering, receiving and stocking, reporting and managing slow-moving and discontinued inventory.

Basic Retail Pricing

Length: 1 hour

The course in Basic Retail Pricing is an introduction to the basic principles of pricing in a typical home improvement operation. The six modules of the course will review key concepts such as pricing terms and calculations, common pricing techniques, price audits and price shopping. The course will also review how retailers can manage their price image and how they can strengthen their overall pricing strategy to improve profitability. Students can check their knowledge with a 25-question test at the end.

Basic Retail Accounting

Length: 30 minutes

The course in Basic Retail Accounting offers an introduction to the often-complicated topic of accounting by explaining the terms used in the two most common financial statements: the income statement and the balance sheet. The course also defines common basic financial ratios retailers can use to compare their operation against others in the industry. Business owners and any employees involved with financial management will benefit from this course.

Additional Resources

Onboarding Handbook

Owners and managers who want to develop their own onboarding program can use this guide to get started. It covers why onboarding is important, best practices and a checklist of items to incorporate into a new hire's first weeks on the job. Find it in the **Resources** tab of NHPA's LMS.

Certified to Help

If you invest resources into training your employees, recognize their hard work with the "Certified to Help" designation. This distinction is available to retailers whose employees have completed a prescribed set of training from NHPA. It includes marketing materials. Learn more at **YourNHPA.org/membership**.

Trainer's Toolbox

The Trainer's Toolbox provides everything you need to lead a short training session during an employee meeting. It provides retailers with lessons under 5 minutes, complete with visual elements and trainer notes. They cover selling skills, merchandising, operations and more. See them all at **nrha.org/trainers-toolbox**.

Path to Success Poster

NHPA's training covers a variety of topics, including product knowledge, selling skills, merchandising and operations. The Path to Success poster shows you how all of those courses fit together, from basic to most advanced. It is available in the **Resources** tab on NHPA's LMS.

6. Appendix

These are more resources to help you develop your training program.

EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to ensure you've covered all of the necessary topics involved in onboarding a new employee.

Click Here to download the checklist.

EVALUATION FORMS

Use these customizable forms for immediate feedback on a training course or program.

Click Here to download the Course Evaluation.

Click Here to download the Program Evaluation.

OTHER RESOURCES

These are resources outside the home improvement retailing industry that may be valuable to your training. Use them to develop your own human resource and management skills to further improve your team.

- *ATD – Association for Talent Development*, **td.org**

This is a professional training association with a range of events, research, books, webcasts and education programs on talent development.

- *SHRM – Society for Human Resource Management*, **shrm.org**

This is a professional society dedicated to human resource professionals. Resources SHRM provides include education, customizable human resource tools, discussion groups and state and federal compliance resources. It also has resources to keep you up to date on hot topic issues.

- *National Retail Federation Foundation*, **nrf.com/who-we-are/nrf-foundation**

The foundation has a wide variety of resources, tools and experiences to support and promote retail education, research and careers. You can also find a range of information on retail industry trends, news and research on nrf.com.

- *How to Start a Training Program*, a book by Carolyn Nilson Published by ATD, this book walks you through the basic steps of creating a training plan with tangible, bottom-line results.

Note: This guide was updated in January 2021. NHPA will provide updates and additions to the material as necessary.



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Brought to you by the North American
Hardware and Paint Association