

Tips for Successful Cross-Training

Cross-training employees is an organizational investment. First and foremost, it increases the overall knowledge of a company's workforce. This knowledge is not limited to simple comprehension of tasks; it also provides a greater understanding and appreciation of all roles and functions within an organization. Cross-training increases workforce sustainability and reduces turnover. It allows management to leverage internal talent and reduce staffing costs, both in hiring and when employees are absent. The ability to staff strategically not only greatly increases flexibility in scheduling, but it also improves collaboration between individuals and departments. In turn, having a more informed and agile workforce will naturally strengthen customer support.

Cross-training has the potential to improve outcomes through increased efficiency, greater employee satisfaction, and enhanced customer support.

1. Set Company-Wide Goals for Improvement

Develop and implement a strategic plan that identifies areas or departments within your company that will benefit from employee cross-training.

2. Be Selective

Thoughtfully consider which employees will be trained across departments. Some employees will be happy in their current positions and may view cross-training as stressful or simply unwelcome.

3. Use Annual Reviews to Highlight Potential Candidates

Use annual reviews to not only highlight strengths and weaknesses of employees, but also to gain insight and feedback from potential cross-training candidates.

4. Prioritize Cross-Training by Department

Determine which areas in your company need the most staffing support to most effectively combat employee turnover and increase employee engagement.

5. Present Cross-Training as an Opportunity, not an Obligation

Employees should see cross-training as an opportunity for growth, with the potential to influence overall company success and increase job security.

6. Survey Your Employees

Request feedback from trainees to better understand the efficacy of their own training and other departments' training as it relates to their job performance as well as how that performance influences their success within their own role.

7. Establish Partnerships to Ensure Long-Term Employee Engagement

Long-term employee engagement relies on successful partnerships between peers, as well as solid rapport with direct supervisors and management. Take proper care in establishing and developing relationships, promoting a culture of communication and teamwork.

8. Ask Long-Standing Employees to Become Mentors

Solicit successful long-term employees to become mentors, allowing them to have greater influence in the company culture.

9. Avoid Specialization

Encourage employees to develop skills and gather information beyond their roles or departments, which will result in a more holistic, well-rounded company.

10. Let Newly Trained Employees Use Their New Skills

Ensure that new skills are retained through regular opportunities to practice after training.

11. Provide Additional Resources and Support

Provide employees (both old and new) with the resources they need to be successful. Training materials should be updated and delivered on a regular basis to ensure employee success throughout your company.

12. Create an Evaluation Strategy

Create a consistent and regular evaluation survey, providing feedback to the employee while concurrently allowing the employee to evaluate the company and its training process.