



**CIPRIANI COLLEGE**  
OF LABOUR AND CO-OPERATIVE STUDIES

# WORK MATTERS COLUMN

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# Training Your Staff In The Post Pandemic

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, organisations were already feeling the pinch of low revenues, rising operating costs and supply chain management shocks. The pandemic has only exacerbated these effects where businesses had to pursue aggressive cost retrenchment strategies, reinvent their business model or face exiting the market altogether. Many did. Given the aggressive changes in the macro-environment coupled with internal systematic problems plaguing every single organisation, the “perform storm” landed. A situation marked by constant change, volatility, fluctuations in customer demand, aggressive competition, and climatic change. The only way out is to equip staff with the skills and competencies required to embrace the changes implied. If staff are not trained with the skills to persevere in times of uncertainty, organisations will run the risk of deskilling their workforces which will lead to their eventual demise. So why then do organisations often reduce their training budgets? – leading to fewer opportunities to equip their inhouse talent. With reduced revenues, the training budget is one of the first to be axed which literally implies that businesses are shooting themselves in the feet. Such a draconian move can only create an unimaginative workforce ready for the hails and swells of the perform storm. So how can organisations navigate this conundrum where the perform storm requires staff to be trained whilst training budgets are reduced?

Training does not always have to be expensive seminars and workshops which after attending and post mortem reflection, are seen as “glorified talk shops” and “sound bites” often creating the “moment” when heard but not transferred to the employee neither the workplace. In training staff with the skills to aid their agility in an environment of uncertainty, businesses can explore low cost and innovative training methods to equip their precious resource with the skills and entrepreneurial mindset required to handle change at the individual and organisational level. So, what are these strategies then?

Given that employees are increasingly digitally inclined during and outside of work, placing video con-

tent of specific tasks on a shared drive, social media page or on the company’s intranet for quick dissemination can help. With multiple digital channels for sharing training content, there is an improved chance of greater content digestion. However, given employees hectic lives or varying motivation, they may not access the content much less to apply the skills in problem solving. As such, a follow-up exercise of arranging staff in peers to discuss how the skills can be used in problem solving can be arranged. This allows staff to engage with the material and one another in the workplace setting. Also, not all employers and staff scroll pass a free or paid webinar. Webinars continue to be an effective training tool to empower staff with practical skills that they may be lacking. For example, employees are more likely to attend webinars with prominent business gurus presenting and those which are problem solving oriented and short in duration.

In constrained circumstances, businesses need to shift training from being employer-led to employee-driven and self-directed. Sharing practical infographics of business processes and standards of good practices in quick moments to staff using an email thread, a discussion forum or WhatsApp group can stimulate the desired reflection and even application to job roles. The convenience of quick sharing and the visual nature of infographics can trigger thinking processes and analogies to use in problem solving at the workplace. Moreover, matching training content to employee’s learning styles is more critical than ever with the increasing digital literacy of staff. Sharing short “bite” size video clips of hard to accomplish workplace tasks or insider perspectives on topics can grip employees’ attention in their few spare moments. Do remember such fragmented training need to place within a larger co-ordinated programme for training and development. So, how then can employers land these ideas to shore? They need to recognize that while they create a space to share content to staff, bringing employees’ reflection of the content and application to “bay” is equally important. Town hall meetings may not create

niche spaces to discuss these ideas in a collaborative manner. Encouraging staff to write a reflection on how they would apply or setting up a community of inquiry for one hour on a Wednesday morning in a calendared manner to encourage content discussion and how work processes can be improved. In this way, learning, reflection and the transfer of learning all take place together in a cost-effective manner. However, it depends on leaders creating a learning space and culture.

Leaders need to de-emphasize roadblock thinking that work is for meeting targets of efficiency or sales leads but also learning about the job, the environment and how best to react. The era has come when learning on work must be rewarded, where staff must be encouraged to take risks in learning what not to do, if organisations are to have a trained workforce against the external odds.

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