

Training for the Future

Thorough employee training programs and profitability go hand in hand.

“If you do what you have always done, you will get what you have always got.” This quote from Mark Twain is one of my favorite lines and a good representation of my philosophy as an educator.

Training is an investment in the human resources of our industry. It is an investment in the people whom we rely on every day to make decisions to improve the efficiency of our production process and the profitability of our companies. There are three reasons to make this investment: developing people, improving the process, and increasing profitability.

The future holds many challenges such as higher raw material costs, increasing production costs, growing demand for food from a growing population, the creation and implementation

of new technology, the demand for new and innovative products, and the list could go on.

Developing Skilled Employees

Skilled employees are necessary to enable our industry to make the necessary adjustments and meet the demands of these challenges.

Training employees can be a tremendous drain on your time and resources. However, before you dismiss the idea of helping your employees learn new skills,

consider the ways that training can affect your employees and your company positively.

Training increases employee productivity. In addition to learning how simply to complete every day jobs, employees can learn skills that enable them to take on more responsibility and help them complete those every day tasks more efficiently.

Learning is a skill. Training allows employees to develop this skill and continue to learn and develop new ideas. No one in your organization knows more about the challenges facing them each day in their jobs as do the people performing that task

Management



Mark Fowler

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every day. By allowing your employees to learn, you give them the opportunity to improve their daily performance and become more productive.

Studies also have demonstrated that training helps reduce employee turnover. Employees who don't receive guidance or have difficulty learning their jobs' responsibilities are much more likely to leave their jobs. Employees are less likely to leave, if they have the opportunity to learn new skills and improve themselves.

Training improves job satisfaction. Investing time and money in employees' skills makes them feel valued and appreciated, and it challenges them to learn more and get more involved in their jobs. Higher job satisfaction ultimately results in reduced turnover and higher productivity.

Improving the Process

Increased production efficiency results in financial gain. Each year there is an enormous amount of new ideas and technology developed, with the intention of improving the way we store and process grain. We work to provide a safe work environment for our employees and a safe, quality product for our customers and the consumers of the foods we make.

Well-trained employees are equipped to implement these new ideas and to adopt and accept new technology and changes in the process. But most importantly, trained employees are more likely to be innovative and help to discover parts in the process that can be improved.

As a supervisor or manager, teaching someone how to perform a task is doing the minimum. Taking the additional time and making the added effort to teach employees why their tasks are important to the process leads to greater success for your company and helps to make employees take pride in their job. In most cases, the employees will work harder, be more productive, and you will have created a better, happier work environment.

Increasing Profitability

The cost of production continues to increase. Whether it is wheat or other raw commodities for the flour mill, utilities, or labor, the cost of production is increasing.

Training should not be an optional item but a vital part of a successful plan to develop a business and its human resources. ►



Participants in an International Grains Program (IGP) short course discuss the production results with Mark Fowler, IGP associate director and class instructor, during a flour milling laboratory training program held at Kansas State University (KSU), Manhattan. Photo by KSU.

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A poorly trained employee can cost potentially more than their wages. Every day our employees are relied upon effectively to manage multi-million dollar facilities that process thousands of dollars worth of wheat into flour. Without proper training, they can cost a company a significant amount of profits by not understanding what adjustments could be made to improve the efficiency of the process.

It may not be easy for a miller to understand why it is important to achieve 77% extraction versus 76% extraction. However, if we equate the change in extraction to the cost of production, it has a greater impact. In very simple terms, if the price of flour is three times the price of millfeed, a lower extraction equates to lower revenue for the products sold.

For example, flour sells for \$21 per hundredweight and millfeed at \$7 per hundredweight and a mill produces 10,000 hundredweight of total products per day. One percent difference in

IMPORTANCE OF EXTRACTION RATES TO REVENUE		
	Flour	Millfeed
Price/cwt.	\$ 21.00	\$ 7.00
Total products produced	10,000 cwts.	
Extraction rate	76%	77%
Flour produced	7,600 cwts.	7,700 cwts.
Millfeed produced	2,400 cwts.	2,300 cwts.
Flour sales revenue	\$ 159,600.00	\$ 161,700.00
Millfeed sales revenue	\$ 16,800.00	\$ 16,100.00
Total gross sales	\$ 176,400.00	\$ 177,800.00
Difference in total sales		\$ 1,400.00

extraction equates to \$1,400 in lost revenue per day, as the table above depicts.

Also, when we consider quality and safety of our products and our employees, knowledgeable employees make fewer mistakes. Training instills pride in product and service and brings a heightened awareness to the impact of the quality of the work being performed.

Hiring and training employees has a cost — skills and knowledge are lost with the former employees, recruitment of

new employees takes time and money. Working to minimize staff turnover will benefit your organization. Employees that receive ongoing training are more likely to commit to their employers, because the completion of the training develops their careers enabling them to take on greater responsibility and achieve greater job satisfaction.

The Future of Training

There are several methods to provide training for employees, such as on-the-job training by a supervisor

or peer-to-peer, self-study courses, online training courses or classroom training.

Before selecting a delivery method for training of employees, take a moment to determine the expected outcomes and benefits of proper training or, more importantly, the consequences of inadequate training.

The first training an employee receives from an employer is internal training such as personal and plant

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safety practices, company policies, and operating procedures. Most would agree that this training is best done by a supervisor or another trusted employee.

External training is most commonly used for professional development. Quite often, the expectation of professional development training is to reinforce what the company has been teaching, hoping the new knowledge will improve what the employee is already doing. It is this type of training that has many more options for delivery. It is important to choose the most appropriate training delivery method for the biggest impact.

Employee training serves to prepare employees to perform the functions of their job. Employee training can be expensive to an organization but not as costly as accidents and mistakes made by poorly trained employees making bad decisions.

- Mark Fowler, associate director,
IGP, KSU

Correspondence or self-study training courses involve written materials that are reviewed on an independent basis. Correspondence courses are useful to deliver general knowledge and principles relevant to the company and its industry.

Internet-based, distance-learning training courses are also an independent training method, but materials and information are accessed via a website instead of being printed. Internet-based training is often facilitated by an instructor and has the benefit of greater interactivity. In many cases, the employer can participate with and monitor the progress of the employee completing an online course.

Group classroom training and seminars involves an instructor who presents information to a group. This method is most useful when several employees require training at the same time or for continuing education training.

Hands-on training is used in classroom or one-on-one situations, in which

it would be impossible to show an employee how to do something without demonstration.

Once it has been decided which training method or methods work best for your company, make a plan, and stick to it.

Employee training serves to prepare employees to perform the functions of their job. Employee training can be expensive to an organization but not as costly as accidents and mistakes made by poorly trained employees making bad decisions.

Successful organizations have one eye looking forward to the future and are actively evaluating employee training needs. For them, it is important to deliver efficient training methods to develop people, improve the process, and increase profitability of the company.

Mark Fowler is associate director of the International Grains Program, Department of Grain Science and Industry, Kansas State University, Manhattan; 785-532-1189.

The advertisement for ASi Industrial features a central image of a grain processing facility with several large silos. The ASi Industrial logo is in the top left, with the text 'Formerly Agri-Systems' below it. To the right, the text reads 'BUILD ON OUR EXPERIENCE', 'INDUSTRIAL CONTRACTOR', and 'BULK PROCESSING'. A list of services includes 'GRAIN ELEVATORS', 'BULK TRANSFER FACILITIES', 'FEED MILLS', 'MILLING SYSTEMS', 'OILSEED CRUSHING', 'CONCRETE SILOS', 'GRAIN BINS', and 'CATWALKS AND TOWERS'. Contact information at the bottom center includes '1308 Minnesota Ave. Ellings, MT 59701', 'P 406.345.4201 F 406.345.4736', and 'ASI-INDUSTRIAL.COM'. The bottom of the ad is a collage of four images: a grain elevator, a conveyor belt, a grain mill, and a grain bin.