

## Do You Need a Training Department?

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As companies grow (both in terms of employee size and revenue), they eventually reach a point where they need to consider whether or not they should provide professional development to their workers. In this article I'll examine the pros and cons of taking on the responsibility of professional development in-house, as well as offer suggestions for other ways to achieve the same outcome.

### What is your company size?

The first thing to consider is how many employees you have. For an employee size of less than 300 - 400, it really isn't economical to provide in-house professional development. You may choose to utilize a local consultant on an ad-hoc basis (depending on the topics you want to deliver) or you may make someone in the organization 50% responsible for coordinating professional development offerings, such as through your local chamber of commerce, CMAA or ACEC chapter, or industry events. The coordinator would simply make sure learning opportunities were announced and keep track of who attended what.

### What kinds of training do your employees need?

#### TECHNICAL SKILLS

Another consideration is the type of professional development



you want to provide. If you're focused on professional credentials like the PE, PMP, or CCM, there are external entities that provide those certifications, and you simply need to set up a funding or reimbursement process.

If you want to provide specialized trade training, you may have an in-house subject matter expert you can utilize, or you might coordinate with other companies in your area to put on an event and bring in an expert. For example, the Carolinas AGC chapter and the North Carolina DOT jointly offered a two-hour workshop regarding contract administration.

Your local community or technical college may have appropriate offerings (or experts) as well.

You can use a similar approach for non-skills-based topics such as Understanding LEED, Procurement and Allocation, or Business Development.

## SOFT SKILLS

The term soft skills has fallen out of favor lately because some believe it makes them sound less necessary than technical skills. Other labels recently used are “human,” “interpersonal,” and “power” skills. Whatever you choose to call them, these are the skills needed to interact with others. They may be communication, negotiation, collaboration, problem solving or a myriad of other skills. These types of topics are not easy to teach because they are more behaviors than observable skills. For instance, if someone questions your ideas, are you quick to put them in their place or do you ask them to say more?

Soft skills are built over time and should be part of an ongoing curriculum. You may want to develop these in house so that the offerings are not generic, but there are external entities such as LinkedIn Learning or Udemy that offer online training in these topics, at very reasonable prices.

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## Leadership Development is a Different Animal

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Leadership development – which is a hot topic lately, given the fact that the average age of a construction leader is over the age of 50 – is best done experientially or through coaching. These approaches require less “formal” approaches, but you must still have clear expectations for what you want to accomplish.

In a few hours you can map out a plan of experiences for future-leaders of your organization. Perhaps, over the course of three or four years, you want them to have experiences in negotiations, risk management, and contract administration. Advance planning will ensure they have opportunities to be on the right projects to learn these skills.

Leadership development is best achieved when the experiences are coupled with coaching. Experience alone doesn't mean one understands what has happened. The coach is available to help “process” the learning, answer questions, suggest additional assignments, and talk through what was learned and how it is applied in the “real world” of running your organization.

Of all the professional development options discussed in this article, leadership development is the one that you most want to keep in-house because it shapes how your business is run. You want to ensure future-leaders understand the values and goals of your organization and will continue to operate it successfully because they understand how the business is run.

Bottom line - your employees expect to learn and grow with your organization. So while you don't have to have a training department in-house, you do need to offer professional development in some way.

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## Resources

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Here are some resources you may want to investigate for the professional development of your people.

### Technical/Business Skills

- » [LinkedIn Learning](#)
- » [Udemy](#)
- » Local technical or community college
- » [Business acumen](#) training
- » Professional associations - local chapter or national offerings

### Soft Skills

- » [LinkedIn Learning](#)
- » [Udemy](#)
- » Local chamber of commerce
- » Local consultant



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## About the Author

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Dr. Nanette Miner is a leadership development and workplace-learning strategy consultant. Through her firm, [The Training Doctor](#), she has revolutionized the way that individuals are prepared for leadership roles in their organizations. Rather than a chosen few, her process is aimed at ensuring everyone in the company has the skills and business acumen of a leader. This approach ensures both immediate and long-term return-on-investment (ROI) for an organization.

She has written articles for *Chief Learning Office magazine*, *Forbes*, and *MBA World* and is a frequent guest on workplace training and career podcasts and talk radio such as *Inc. Radio* and *America's Workforce Radio*.

Nanette regularly speaks at industry conferences and corporate learning events on how to integrate leadership capabilities throughout an organization. An author of eight books, her most recent is *Future-Proofing Your Organization*.

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