

## Protect Your Investment in Training

Investing in training can be a significant cost for a new business, so you need to ensure you get the most out of it.

When planning the implementation of any new system many areas need to be considered, from analysing the business requirements, selecting the best solution, selecting a supplier through to the installation of the system.

One area that is often overlooked, or cut back on, is that of training. **Even the best implemented application will fail if training is inadequate.** The most successful implementations are where there is a solid bedrock of knowledge about the application – the basis of which is training.

The time in which the **return on investment** can be recovered is a key consideration when selecting an application, and one of the key factors that will influence how quickly a system can become operational is training. Effective training will reduce implementation time scales speeding up the ROI.

Training needs planning to ensure that the correct staff are given the most appropriate training to ensure that the new system provides a return on investment as soon as possible, and that the users are all using the system effectively.

The requirements for training will vary, typically depending on the type of application being implemented. An accounts system, for example Sage Accounts, will have relatively few users, and within that they may specialise in specific areas (payable, receivable etc). A customer relationship management solution such as GoldMine® or ACT! by Sage will have a much larger user base and each user will use various aspects of the application.

With a CRM solution there will be a basic level of functionality that almost everyone will require to cover the day to day activities. There will also be specialist areas for example for Sales, Marketing or Support functions. In addition, the database administrators will need training in the management of the system – unless you rely on your supplier to do everything for you. With this type of user, you should also ensure that there is a good level of backup, both in terms of a course manual and telephone help, to refresh the training on tasks done only occasionally.

**Make sure the benefits are clear to employees.** Training will be more effective if you have their buy-in - and that's more likely if they know how their own skills will be enhanced and they can see how their skills will benefit the company as a whole.

Consider different ways of providing training. At RD Associates we offer both public and one-company courses to meet the requirements of our users. However, this is backed up by one-to-one sessions of specific tasks, or by attending a client "sales team" meetings and presenting a specific topic to the team at a time when they would all be together anyway – therefore minimising disruption to their normal working day.

To get the most out of any training, ensure that the staff are fully briefed before hand.

- Where is the training?
- Do they know how to get there?
- What are the planned times?
- Are there any pre-requisites to be met?
- Is lunch provided – do they have any special needs

By ensuring all these aspects are covered beforehand, you staff will feel more comfortable about attending the training, and be in the right frame of mind to get the most from the course.

Try and get cover for them during the training and minimise the interruptions during the training course. Covering their job when they are away, especially if the course is a long one, can also help reduce the backlog that awaits them on their return.

Off-site training offers many benefits as delegates can escape from their day to day responsibilities and concentrate on the course.

Time and money invested in training may be wasted if the skills your employees acquire aren't used to benefit your business. But showing you're concerned about employees' personal development in this way, you can improve employee recruitment and retention - helping to protect your investment.

RD Associates are specialists in the provision of Customer Relationship Management solutions, and as part of their services they provide a wide range of CRM related training courses, and also work with partners to provide training in associated areas where necessary.

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