

## Selecting Trainers Within Your Organization

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Changes in technology, on-boarding of new hires, preparing workers to deal with significant organizational changes, introduction of new processes, products, procedures or markets...all of these will require new behaviors and accomplishments for your workforce. To ensure that employees perform in desired ways, organizations generally turn to training as the major means for successfully achieving this transformation. Organizations, faced with the challenges listed above and lacking sufficient numbers of learning and development or workplace learning and performance specialists, have little choice but to select in-house personnel to become the trainers who will make it all happen. In most companies, the majority of “trainers” are employees who have demonstrated strong capability in performing their specialty work, appear to communicate well and who are available to take on the educational role offered them. Sometimes they are “volunteered” into the role.

If there is a valid need to build new competencies within the workforce and training is an appropriate way to do this, then it becomes imperative that those selected to conduct the skill-knowledge building sessions be up to the task. Poor training is an immense waste of time and resources and results in little to no transfer to the job. It is essential to select the right people from your organization to become trainers. Training is as much a trade or profession as whatever the people’s current work specialty is. Important rule (and if you don’t believe us, reflect on all of the teachers and trainers you had): *It is not everyone who is cut out for the job.*

What follows is a solid starter list of criteria for selecting appropriate internal employees to assume the mantle of trainer.

### A Starter Set of Criteria for Selecting Internal Trainers

1. *Excellent experience with both the content/subject-matter area of what she or he will be teaching and with the organization.* This means that each selected trainer is viewed by supervisors and peers as someone who performs well and also has a strong conceptual understanding of the job, the organization and the changes that are required.
2. *Is passionate about and committed to what she or he will be teaching.* The potential trainer must believe in the content of the training and be determined to demonstrate the value of what the learner-trainees will be required to master.
3. *Readily appears credible to learner-trainees.* To make training work, the learners must perceive the trainer as a role model – someone to emulate. The credibility of the trainer transfers to credibility and desirability of content for those being trained.

4. *Possesses a strong and empathetic understanding of the learner-trainees, including their characteristics, their concerns and the obstacles they encounter in mastering what is being taught.* This translates into the trainer being “learner-centered” as opposed to content-centered. The focus is on the learners as they *are*, and not as some ideal *should-be*. The trainer is aware of what it takes, intellectually and emotionally, to move from a current state of competency to a desired end goal. This does not eliminate rigor or demand for high performance. These remain, but within an atmosphere of support, encouragement and patience to foster success.
5. *Possesses excellent facilitator characteristics.* These include: An ease in managing groups; an ability to draw out thoughts and ideas from others; a facility to synthesize what others say so as to make it meaningful for all; a friendly but firm manner to cut off contributions that are irrelevant, overly lengthy or that sidetrack; an ability to direct the flow of information input from a group, encouraging free expression, but in a coherent and integrated manner; a facility to bring discussion to a close, tying all useful elements together.
6. *Is able to manage time while still being attentive to learners’ interests and needs.* Time management is an essential quality of an excellent trainer. This means that the potential trainer not only gets the learners to meet all of the training objectives but does it in a way that makes the learning pleasurable and meaningful – effective process and outcomes.
7. *Is passionate about achieving learning success.* This is evidenced by a desire to have every learner succeed. The potential trainer understands that her or his success is based on the success of the learners. The reward for the trainer is the joy that comes from how well the learners, through the trainer’s guidance, can demonstrate performance.
8. *Has the ability to maintain order and control without creating a constrained atmosphere.* An excellent trainer conducts training in an atmosphere of openness and conversational dialogue with the learners. Nevertheless, at all times, the learners are aware that there is a schedule to follow and that productive activity is the priority.
9. *Can demonstrate flexibility and imagination in order to breathe life into the learning activities.* Each group has its own personality. Although the activities in a course or program are standardized, the way they are presented and executed require adaptation to the learners’ backgrounds, levels of competency and work contexts. The trainer must take these into account in presenting, guiding and debriefing the learning activities in which the learners engage.
10. *Present a neat, professional, organized and ethical image.* The trainer is the representative of the organization. The appearance and manner of the trainer, including how she or he expresses ideas or presents examples reflects on the

organization. Learner-trainees are quick to emulate role models. Best that this be done consistent with organizational standards and beliefs.

### **Do Such Paragons Exist in Your Organization?**

The answer is a firm, "Yes." Every organization has among its employees excellent performers who are dedicated to doing their jobs well and who already take leadership in helping others to learn and grow in their work. It requires seeking these individuals out, verifying their characteristics and providing them with two things: A valued, meaningful reason to become a trainer and excellent trainer-training to build their professional competencies. Remember: Select for characteristics; train for competencies. The measurable rewards to your organization will more than compensate for the effort in selecting and preparing an outstanding training team.