

Signature Press

TRAINING: THE RACE IS NEVER OVER



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By John Ely
Hotel & Motel Management

I remember back, way back, in third or fourth grade thinking, "I can't wait to get through these darn multiplication tables! Once I'm done with them, I'm home free!" But of course, the education didn't come to a screeching halt once I could multiply seven times eight, and neither did the realization that there was more I had to learn.

Moving onto college, I thought, "Once I have this degree, I'll be done with school forever — finally!" Once again, I was a bit short-sighted, because three degrees later, I'm still educating myself in some fashion nearly every day. My point is, the more I have learned over the years, the more I discover there is to learn. It sounds and is cliché, but it is absolutely true.

Training and education are funny things. At the beginning of almost every class, course or seminar I've ever taken, there's always this feeling of, "Wow, once I learn this I'll be unstoppable." But coming out, I always uncover a thirst for even more knowledge. I always find more questions than answers in nearly every training event I attend. Maybe it's just human nature as Abraham Maslow showed in his work in the early 1950s on the hierarchy of human needs.

Maslow outlined that as our basic needs are filled, new, more evolved needs show up wanting attention in their place. Is there a hierarchy of needs when it comes to training too? Do we crave more skills, knowledge and know-how as we progress in our lives? I think so. Just like all good paths to learning, workplace training should build on our past and present experiences and skills.

Training programs should be scaled and customized for your particular needs. If nothing else, training needs to be reinforced periodically. Are you aware of anyone who learned to play the piano after one lesson? Of course not. It took constant reinforcement of the previously learned skills and then an adaptation for future lessons. Training programs need to have Maslow's "hierarchy" built in.

If your staff is participating in some kind of training (and they should be), there should be a never-ending path of progress. The students should know where they stand and where there is work to be done. No staff member or department should be exempt from continual training. No one knows everything about their craft no matter how many years on the job. Trust me; even Bill Gates hasn't stopped reading about technology!

Revisiting course materials, either in a classroom setting or online, is crucial to making the new knowledge, skills and behaviors a working part of a person's day. This is even more important when it comes to sales or customer service skills where there may be old habits to overcome.

Training is a competitive edge and leads to better employee retention. It is also vital to an organization's viability in the marketplace. There's a saying around my office that I love and it goes like this, "I'd rather train an employee and have them leave the company, than not train an employee and have them stay!" It's sage advice.