

## **What's Different About Leading Today? Training.**

A lot of training seems to be money wasted as staff leave the industry all together and/or take whatever skilling investment you've made in them to another organisation. This leads companies to hold a grudging view of training, which leads to a downward spiral of quantity, quality and choice of training for their staff.

A great deal of training available today is built on the concept of education and learning found in most schools and universities, with an emphasis on short-term results rather than long-term learning. Remember the futurist predictions of three or four-day workweeks and paperless offices where everything was automated and there would be huge offices run by only a couple of people? We're still waiting and while we wait we must develop our staff in a cost-effective, quality way. .

Now we can rely on increasingly complicated and "competent" technology. However, it's becoming sharply apparent the smarter the technology, the more educated and sophisticated those who have responsibility for using and adjusting the technology need to be. Training required to do this is not just about knowing how to push buttons alone, but also about knowing the reasons behind buttons – abstract thinking, considering actions and consequences, observing results and knowing what incremental changes and adjustments will make appreciable differences in desired results.

There are many difficulties with training in contact centres. I regularly facilitate workshops and see hidden and ignored illiteracy, lack of motivation, fatigue, distraction and most of all a disheartened and sometimes burned-out workforce longing to "do the right thing" for their employers. These difficulties are combined with a growing frustration in staff who experience and resent the lack of trust and adult approach to who they are and what they do for the organisation.

Effective leadership is about caring enough to find, keep, communicate with and develop the best staff. New approaches to training are emerging, where specialized educators provide safe and fertile "learning environments" where people can discover and strengthen their own special skill sets, not just memorise a set of numbers or key strokes and comply with other-worldly KPIs (key performance indicators) dictated by people who rarely have experienced the environment staff are working within.

Effective training recognises an individual's personal value within the organisation by encouraging them to share thoughts and ideas in groups and one-on-one with their leaders (see last week's article). It also stresses conceptual thinking (such as "walking a mile in the customer's shoes"), consultative selling and courtesy.

Thankfully, I've seen and facilitated workshops in some centres with unusually high staff satisfaction, retention rates, productivity and consistent quality, but they are the exception. Excellent leaders understand and emphasise more than superficial, just-what's-needed-to-get-through-the-day training. They are bold and creative with training, using it expertly as the motivational and loyalty-producing tool it can be.

***Read about the author, Darlene D. Richard, at [www.CallCentreINTEGRITY.com/articles.htm](http://www.CallCentreINTEGRITY.com/articles.htm)***