



1. Not Training? It Will Cost You.

According to NHPA's *2017 Employee Compensation Report*, about 50 percent of retailers had a formal employee training program. Those who do not have a formal training program often are unwilling to commit money or time to training. However, the cost of not training is much higher.

Fortunately, training is not a high ticket investment. NHPA has a range of training programs available for the cost of your NHPA membership. You'll also need to pay employees for the time they spend studying. You might even pay for certifications for employees who want to specialize in a certain department.

Whatever dollar amount you spend, realize that poorly trained employees will either mislead customers with incorrect information or not engage them at all. Even if they do manage to close a sale with a customer, they've likely only sold the bare minimum, without suggesting add-on sales to increase the transaction size. When deciding how much time and effort you're going to spend on training, consider the cost of training compared to the cost of not training.

THE HIGH COST OF NOT TRAINING

Low customer service. Poorly trained employees are afraid they won't know the answers to customers' questions. They might avoid customers rather than engage them.

Lost sales. Poorly trained employees are likely to only sell a customer what that customer asked for. They won't know how to suggest add-on sales. Customers may even leave without buying anything if they sense employees don't understand their project. And if they leave, they may not return the next time they need a home improvement item.

Increased shrinkage. Poorly trained employees will not engage customers and be aware of what's happening in the store. That is a perfect opportunity

for shoplifters to do their work. Employees who are not trained may also feel unhappy with their jobs and be more likely to steal from you.

Increased turnover. Poorly trained employees may not think you, the employer, is investing in their future success. They're likely to leave as soon as they get the opportunity. They will also feel overwhelmed because they can't do their jobs properly.

THE BENEFITS OF TRAINING

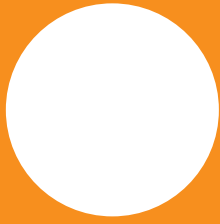
Higher transaction sizes. Well-trained employees can anticipate the needs of customers working on projects. In addition to suggesting add-on sales, these employees can upsell customers to better products, also resulting in a higher transaction size.

Better customer service. Well-trained employees are confident they can answer customers' questions, so they are not afraid to interact with them. Good customer service means shoplifters will have less of a chance to do their work, reducing your shrinkage.

Higher job satisfaction. Well-trained employees are more likely to enjoy their jobs and keep their jobs longer. If you show you are investing in them by training them to do their jobs, they will want to invest their time and talent into your business.

Higher productivity. Well-trained employees spend less time asking questions and more time selling. They can take care of each customer's needs quickly, creating a more efficient salesfloor.

A safer store. Well-trained employees know how to do their jobs safely, and how to keep the store safe for customers. This reduces an employee's downtime due to an on-the-job injury. An accident-free workplace helps lower your insurance, too.



2. How to Set Up a Training Program

1. ESTABLISH YOUR GOALS

2. APPOINT A TRAINER

Since you're reading this guide, this someone is probably you! If you are the store owner with a lot of other responsibilities, consider delegating someone else on your staff to be the trainer so they can give training the attention it deserves. Here are the tasks a trainer will have.

Monitor progress of each employee. It's the trainer's job to keep employees accountable so they don't fall behind. If they miss a training session or need to retake a test, help them schedule a time to do that.

Maintain records of each employee. NHPA makes it easy to monitor progress of each employee with its online tracking program. Each time an employee takes a test, the trainer gets an email notification.

Hold employees accountable. Stick to the training schedule you outlined at the beginning of

your program. Outline the consequences of not completing assigned training tasks. Have a reward or recognition for those that complete the training.

Delegate training or be the trainer. Decide if the person conducting the training will be an on-the-floor mentor, or if you'll assign others for that task.

3. DECIDE WHO TO TRAIN

More than likely, everyone could use some level of training, so you may want to prioritize where to focus your efforts. Once you've established your goals, decide which employees could benefit. Start by listing everyone in your company according to their training needs.

New employees. They need to learn not only job skills but also all about your company. This is an important time for helping the new hire adjust to a new workplace and feel a part of your team. The way you get this person started will have an impact on how the employee performs in the future.

Veteran employees. They may need a refresher course to learn about new developments in the industry or to make up for deficiencies in skills. Here are some ways you can decide if current employees need training:

- *Look at performance records.* Look at accident reports that might indicate a need for safety training. Look at annual reviews for areas where employees might have requested training but

never received it. Harassment complaints against employees may indicate a need for sensitivity training, for example.

- *Observe.* When you're out on the salesfloor, be aware of how employees might be struggling to perform.
- *Ask them.* An employee's annual review is a great time to talk about where employees would like additional training. Get them involved in the process of what training needs to happen and you'll have greater buy-in from veteran employees.
- *Ask managers.* Managers are likely to know which employees need additional training. They may also have suggestions for who could be cross-trained in

4. LIST THE REQUIRED COURSES

Make sure the courses you offer align with the goals you set and the needs of your company. It is also helpful to list the estimated time each course will take. This will help you budget your resources. It will also help employees plan for how much time they should commit to the course. Here are some types of training to consider.

- *New Hire Orientation.* Introduce the employee to everyone in the company, review the history and mission of the store and review store safety. You can find a new-hire checklist in the Appendix.
- *Product knowledge.* Help an employee learn the uses and features of all of the products in your store.
- *Project knowledge.* This training helps an employee learn how to walk a customer through a project. It should also help employees learn to do the project.
- *OSHA/store safety.* This training will help keep both the employees and customers safe. This is a good training topic to review frequently.

- *Sensitivity training.* Sexual harassment and discrimination training may fulfill a legal requirement, but also is a good idea to help prevent problems in the future.
- *Store services.* If the employee is hired to perform a specific service, such as pipe threading, offer the appropriate training.
- *Job-specific training.* There may be specific tasks around the store, such as running a cash register, where you need to offer training.

FOR EXAMPLE: Once you've determined that raising transaction size is a goal for your store, and employees don't seem to be suggesting many add-on sales, particularly when helping customers with projects, it's time to determine how to train employees accordingly. You choose the Project PRO training series from NHPA, as it will help your employees understand the value of selling an entire project as well as give them the knowledge they need to help customers with specific projects.

5. DETERMINE THE FORM OF TRAINING

Take advantage of all of the forms of training available, including online training, classroom training and one-on-one in-store training. Be aware that different employees will have different learning styles. Mixing styles will help different learners. For example, product knowledge can be a mix of online and one-on-one training. Use NHPA's online Basic Training courses to give employees a base level of knowledge, and then send the employee out on the floor with a veteran employee for more advanced knowledge. Remember the four basic steps of training.

- *Tell them.* Explain what you'll cover in the training session and give them the "big picture". Tell them the information you are going to cover.
- *Show them.* Demonstrate what you just told them, going over each step of the process.
- *Let them try.* Let them try the process or demonstrate the skill themselves, or have them

instruct you how to do it. When they make a mistake, help them figure out what they did incorrectly. Deal with one mistake at a time and let them know it's alright to make mistakes.

- *Repeat.* Offer plenty of encouragement.
- *Give them feedback.* If there is a written test that goes along with the material, now is the time to give it. Analyze their learning process and praise every success. Encourage them to ask questions.

FOR EXAMPLE: NHPA's Project PRO courses are available online. However, you would also like each employee to shadow a veteran employee in each department. After employees complete the Exterior Painting section of Project PRO, for example, they will shadow your veteran paint employee for one hour to learn more about the specific products your store carries.

6. COMMIT YOUR RESOURCES

The resources you commit to training consist of the time you allow employees to train as well as the cost of the course. Online courses, such as those offered by NHPA, are cost effective as many employees can train for one low price. Higher-level training courses for managers may cost more. Remember that you cannot expect to reap the benefits of training unless you make the investment.

As you determine what resources, both time and money, you will invest in training, here are some questions to consider.

- How much time will you allow for employees, both new and current? New employees may require more time than existing employees.
- When will you allow that time for training, in relation to all of the other tasks employees have?
- Is training voluntary or mandatory? If training is

mandatory, check your state laws, as you may be required to pay for the time employees spend training. If it's mandatory, carve out time during the workday for them to train.

- What is your training budget?
- Will you offer an incentive for training? If training is voluntary, you may want to offer an incentive for finishing a course. While not necessary, incentives help motivate employees.

FOR EXAMPLE: You decide that all employees must take two Project PRO training courses each week. Since each course lasts approximately 20 minutes, you are committing that each employee will spend approximately 40 minutes of mandatory, paid training time off the sa

8. EVALUATE

When employees finish a course, review the plan you created and see if it has been effective. Decide how often you will evaluate and build that into your plan. Here are some ways you can evaluate your training:

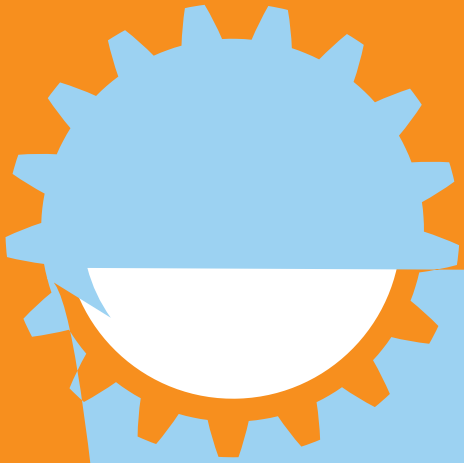
Ask. Ask your employees about the courses they have taken. Ask about the pace of the learning and if the information was presented in a way they could understand. Do they feel the knowledge they gained will better equip them to do their jobs? Don't forget about the intangibles, too. Employees will likely be more satisfied with their jobs and have a better work ethic if they have the proper training.

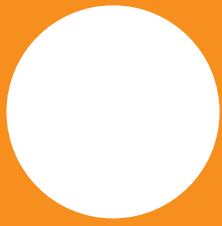
3. On-the-Job Training

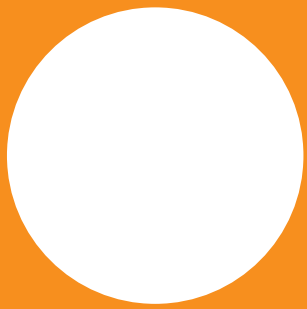
One common way home improvement retailers train their employees is by having the new hire follow a long-time employee around the store. On-the-job training may seem like a practical and easy way to get employees up to speed. Since most people learn best by doing, on-the-job training should be an important part of your training program. However, if you don't select the proper person for the task, and if the training isn't organized, you'll have mediocre results. Here are some tips to help you get the most out of on-the-job training.

Create a Plan.

3 Steps to Training on the Job







LEVEL 100

Basic Inventory Management

Length: 1 hour

The course in Basic Inventory Management is an introduction to the basic concepts and best practices of managing inventory in a home improvement retail operation. In seven modules, the course outlines the components of the inventory cycle, including ordering,

Additional Resources

Onboarding Handbook

Use this guide to develop your own onboarding program. It covers why onboarding is important, best practices and a checklist of items to incorporate into a new hire's first weeks on the job. It is included in the Employee Retention Toolkit, or may be purchased separately at YourNHPA.org/shop. NHPA Premier Members can find it in the Resources tab of NHPA's LMS.

Employee Retention Toolkit

This kit contains a variety of strategies, best practices, templates and resources for helping you reduce turnover at your organization. Contents include examples of how retailers are reducing turnover, NHPA's Onboarding Handbook, interview best practices, job description templates and more. Get the kit at

Trainer's Toolbox

The Trainer's Toolbox provides everything you need to lead a short training session during an employee meeting. It provides retailers with lessons under 5 minutes, complete with visual elements and trainer notes. They cover selling skills, merchandising, operations and more. See them all at

Path to Success Poster

NHPA's training covers a variety of topics, including product knowledge, selling skills, merchandising and operations. The Path to Success poster shows you how all of those courses fit together, from basic to most advanced. It is available in the

6. Appendix

These are more resources to help you develop your training program.

[NHPA ACADEMY CATALOG](#)

