Why Your Employees Just Don’t Get It. (It’s Not Because They’re Stupid.)

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Your small business is no different than a big company in that everybody you have on your payroll is there because they bring something great and unique to the table. But, unlike a big company, you probably have to do all your training yourself, and often the most realistic way to get people working quickly is through on-the-job work and training where the new hire watches you or another employee.

Many times you thought you explained something very clearly yet the new hire doesn’t do what you asked or trained them to do. You end up frustrated and think that they just don’t get it. However, in the majority of cases, you don’t have any cognitive issues to deal with, but, rather, a communication problem. Adjust your communication and you’ll probably find that the worker performs really well, just like you want them to.

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The importance of starting with a

big step back

It’s super easy when you’re training someone to forget that you were once in their shoes. You tend to think that just because *you* understand it, they should too. But, that’s not always the case.

A major key to successful training is to slow down a little and take a step back. Remember that people don’t want to look stupid or be embarrassed. They’re probably going to just nod “yes” if you plow through a bunch of stuff and ask them on the spot if they get it. Tell them flat out to stop you if they don’t understand. Let them know that you can pause any time to answer a question and that you’d rather do that and get a great result than have them be confused and not do the job correctly.

The 4 major hurdles to jump through for great training results

Once you acknowledge that you can’t just prattle on and you shift into the right mindset to empathize a little, there are four common barriers to understanding, based on Hubbard’s learning technology, that you’ll still have to overcome with your trainees.

1. Lack of substance

Sometimes when you’re trying to teach somebody, you might have to deal with more abstract concepts. It’s important to give people examples or tools that help them fully visualize the concept.

For example, if you’re a dentist and your patient doesn’t know anything about implants, you might have to show them a physical model. The model is something tangible they can see and touch, which makes it easier for the patient to form a

working definition of what you're talking about.

In the same way, when you're training new employees, you have to figure out where you have information gaps. Use whatever you can to make what's "imaginary" more concrete to the trainee.

2. Steep gradients

Imagine you're teaching addition to a bunch of first graders. Then, all of the sudden, you throw exponents or all kinds of other more advanced math at them. What do you think would happen? Probably, just a lot of blank stares. The learning gradient is just way too steep.

You can't just jump a bunch of levels and expect trainees to do well without knowing what in the world you're even talking about, either. You have to take it step by step. If your worker looks lost, go back. Ask them where they got lost and figure out the pace they need to master the task you're working on.

3. Misunderstood words

Typically, if you throw in a new word or phrase at a trainee, one they've never heard before or just don't understand, you'll lose them. This gets frustrating because you mistakenly think they're checking out or bored, when, in reality, they didn't understand the definition or meaning of something you said and it threw them for a loop. This fundamental problem of not having the right definition for a word or words is why we can sometimes get to the bottom of a page and completely forget everything we just read.

Instead of forcing a trainee to piecemeal together what something means from context (which may or may not give them something accurate), encourage them to ask for a straight meaning, or have them look up the dictionary definition. Then

have them practice rephrasing that term or defining it in their own words. Use it in a few sentences. If they can do that, they probably have a pretty good grasp of what it means.

4. Thinking you know everything.

If you think you know everything, then it becomes difficult to want to keep learning, because you don't think you have to or that there's even anything left to learn. This know-it-all attitude can hold you back when you're training others because you can become close-minded to the fact that you're not seeing different issues or opportunities with the trainees. Always ask yourself if you're missing something and be willing to hear the trainees out.

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With an eye on your communication, training workers and obtaining great results is totally attainable

Small business leaders often have to train workers on their own. Good communication is crucial during that training in order for the leaders to get good results. If you feel like your new hire just doesn't get it, start by slowing down and putting yourself back in the trainee's shoes. Then pay close attention, not just to the specific language or tangible tools you use but also to the pace of what you're doing and the attitude you do it with. With all of those hurdles properly addressed, your trainees will likely perform just the way you need them to in no time.

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