

case study

Workplace Essential Skills training

Financial institute

New model for training

A small town branch of a major Canadian financial institution, traditionally employing Canadian born women, realized the need to improve Oral Communication, Continuous Learning and Working with Others skills in the workplace. In this unusual situation, every full-time staff member, including the branch manager, participated in the training.

A learning styles workshop preceded the Essential Skills training and was successful in assisting the workplace team to understand each member in new ways. Oral Communication and Working with Others programming was then offered in numerous modular sessions during the half hour just prior to opening to the public.

With training built specifically to the needs of this business, full time employees have improved their understanding of communication skills, as well as skills needed in the workplace to work efficiently and effectively with one another and with clients.

“This is a new model for training and we really liked it. We have attended lots of training, but it has always been prescribed and not in response to a direct need.”

“This training was beneficial for learning about how others learn and work. It helps me to understand why their approach might be different from mine.”

“The training reinforced my commitment to my job and to my team.”



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Oil service manufacturing

Training makes sense

An oil service manufacturing company in Alberta's heartland had a problem with communications breaking down in the plant. The site manager had determined that his firm should become an "employer of choice" and agreed to the Essential Skills training as a means to improve employee retention. He also hoped that the training would increase job satisfaction and his employees' ability to succeed at work and in their everyday lives.

Oral Communications and Working With Others were identified as the highest needs for Essential Skills training in the almost exclusively Canadian born, male, and skilled workforce. A series of workshops ranging from Communication Basics to Conflict Resolution were offered to each of three groups: front line, team lead and management.

Confidence and communication was improved. Increased capacity to work in high performance teams was also a result, as every group that participated in the training owned some responsibility for learning better communication skills, and insisted that every other group take ownership as well.

"The whole process made sense to us. We liked that it was not canned, but was specifically tailored to the needs of our workplace."

"There has been a really positive impact on our employees. There is more tolerance visible between people on the floor and between management and people on the floor. This leads to less stress. People have a better understanding of individual styles and the importance of non-verbal communication."



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Entertainment facility

Training meets needs

The human resources manager at a facility employing 500 people, many of who were immigrants, recognized that many workers were struggling in the workplace because their English was not strong enough for them to understand instructions, read notices, and communicate well with their supervisors and co-workers. After a comprehensive needs assessment, the decision was made to provide Essential Skills training, specifically in Reading, Writing, Oral Communication, and Document Use.

A series of Document Use workshops, in which the other targeted Essential Skills were embedded, was offered weekly to ESL learners working predominantly in the facility's hospitality areas. This training was successful as workshops were geared to specific areas of interest and used relevant resources, including documents used in the workplace.

Taking the time to build trust and confidence in the employees, and to work closely with the HR manager led to success in this workplace and an ongoing desire by management and staff for more training.

“Workplace Essential Skills trainers, facility management and most importantly, the learners, collaborated together to design a successful program that clearly met the needs of employees.”

“We now feel more confident about the strategies we use in the workplace, especially to manage conflict.”

“We are more willing to take risks and try to speak in English, even if we don't have the exact right words.”



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Hotel and conference centre

Training improves morale

Recognized as both an Employer of Choice and for its environmental protection policies and practices, the hotel is part of a chain that believes in investing in its employees.

A lengthy and comprehensive needs assessment established that oral and written communication were the priority areas for Workplace Essential Skills training for the predominantly female, immigrant and Temporary Foreign Worker staff.

A plain language workshop at the start of the training was a great start to improving workplace communication. Thirty hours of Oral Communication and Writing workshops for front line workers improved service to guests and internal communications.

Management and staff were happy with the results of this short-term intervention and have expressed a desire for ongoing training in these and other Essential Skills.

This short term intervention was successful and has begun to build a culture of learning – more training has been requested.

“Supporting new and existing employees to attend training, increased employee skills, and improved the morale and confidence of staff.”

“The learners were keen and worked hard to improve their workplace skills during training.”



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Public sector

Training builds capacity

This organization provides training and work experience to individuals, often in cooperation with employers, training providers, and other community organizations.

Through a comprehensive needs assessment of the staff and learners, practitioners learned that training practices weren't dealing with the variety of barriers faced by these learners. The practitioners developed three workshops with individualized training. Staff members came away with a better understanding of skills development and the importance of writing in plain language, and the learners focused on Numeracy and Computer Use skills which had been identified as high priorities. They did this through practical activities such as reading nutrition labels and learning about shopping and money tips. The workshop atmosphere naturally supported other Essential Skills such as Reading, Thinking, Oral Communication, Document Use and Working with Others.

Management and staff were happy with the results of the training intervention and felt that it was an excellent partnership. Training created awareness and filled gaps that they hadn't realized were there.

"We need to put a budget case forward to have more WES training in our programs and to look at existing programs to integrate WES."

"Despite a tremendous number of barriers, including lifestyle, lack of education, and lack of positive influences, learners showed perseverance and determination."

