

Why Do Schools “Pass” On Training?

by Michael Purles and Pam Tiemeyer Jones

Now, let's get something out of the way up front. This article is going to sound, well...rather self-serving. However, we don't know how to relate our experience with this vitally important subject without the potential of that happening. It can't be helped, so we hope you will finish the article before making up your mind.

Training in the education industry is our business. We have traveled throughout the United States and Canada. Doing so, we feel we have a very clear picture of how training is generally valued or undervalued.

Schools work very hard to implement systems for better conversion in admissions; teachers are tasked with implementing best practices for retention; the business office scrambles to boost collections and increase relationships with employers for better placement statistics; and the school administration is buried having to cut costs to compensate for less than stellar performance.

See if this sounds familiar to you. Your school has been missing your enrollment or start budget on more or less a consistent basis for long enough that school ownership says, “We've got to fix this.” The DOA or vice president of admissions is sent out to research and find someone to come to provide training. “We need the best training

available” is the message, but the reality is, “revenues are down, so make certain it won't cost much.”

Every organization wants a good and usually “quick” return on its investments—employees, training, whatever is invested in. Just as there are good times to buy investments and bad, so it is with training. Investing in training only when you are hurting is a dangerous way to spend the school's money.

This is a tough place to be making those kinds of decisions. Maybe you engaged someone or maybe the decision was made for an employee to do the training. Either way, this is probably what happened. A date for training was decided upon, or maybe two so that you didn't take all of your admissions representatives offline at the same time. The training seemed to be a success. All participants seemed to enjoy it and when asked, they said they “got it” and were certain they could improve their statistics.

A couple of months later, how did it turn out? Did you find yourself saying, “Well, that didn't work. We lost money that we couldn't afford to lose.” Training usually always gets the bad rap after

this kind of experience. Is that really fair? Whose fault is it anyway? Are you ready to share in the blame?

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dangerous way to spend the school’s money. There is a huge temptation to take shortcuts that will hurt the final result. What are the three essential dynamics for any admissions professional to be successful? They are:

- ✓ Natural ability – Don’t you love finding a superstar, but there are so few around.



Lightpoint Learning

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PAMELA TIEMEYER JONES and **MICHAEL PURLES**, the founders of Lightpoint Learning, bring over forty years of management and education know-how to the training industry. Accomplished speakers, they have a wealth of experience engaging audiences, large and small, from all walks of life in a variety of subjects. They have taught employees from many industries including postsecondary education from Alaska to Florida and in the provinces of Canada.

Lightpoint Learning has developed courseware and seminar materials to meet today’s demand for business’ most sought after courses including: coaching, communication, customer service, listening skills and time mastery. For the education industry, Lightpoint Learning has engineered training courses to meet the unique needs of admissions, financial aid, faculty development and operations departments. All course materials and seminar instruction is adapted to provide for each client’s individual needs regarding business philosophy and operation systems. Recognizing that providing provocative, up-to-date, best practices training fulfills only a portion of a company’s training needs, Lightpoint Learning utilizes a three-step approach to providing the return on investment every organization is looking for which includes a system to encourage training retention and mastery of the principles taught.

Pamela Jones resides in Alpharetta, Ga. with her husband and is a graduate of the University of Kansas. Her management and training career began in the retail and service industries prior to joining the education industry. She quickly became a star after accepting her first position as an admissions representative and in a few short years found herself in positions of sales and operations management on a local and regional level. Her experience spans nearly every department within a school and she is known for her ability to empower people to become invincible teams. She has also excelled in the industry as a sales account executive for a national marketing agency where she launched a

training department to address the conversions issues of admissions. Pamela is a sought after speaker by state and national organizations, not only for her business knowledge and talents, but because of her wit, energy and positive attitude.



Michael Purles lives in Salt Lake City, Utah with his wife. They are the parents of four children. Michael is a graduate of Brigham Young University and has worked in management positions in a diverse number of industries including personal financial consulting, investment management, business management and his real love—training and development. No matter what his company position was, Michael has always been involved with writing and training. He has authored training manuals on communication, coaching, customer service and time management. Believing in the power of the written word, he has also written two books centering on the intrinsic values people are born with. Michael carries his philosophy into the classroom that business’ real rewards come in the relationships with and development of people.



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- ✓ Supervision – This is up to you. Good admissions departments have good leaders.
- ✓ Training – Since there are so few people who have the natural, innate ability to recruit (probably in the 3–5 percent range), ongoing training is a necessity to stay ahead of the productivity curve.

All of us try to make good hires and we also try to give our teams good leaders. But, what about training? We expect the team's leader to take care of that. However, in this frenetic business where a new tidal wave of challenge seems to hit every day, swallowing up all available time, they have little time to do it. So, we give lip service to a necessity, but we never really embrace it.

Now, can we share with you how it ought to be done without offending you? Stop putting it off until a better time. Frequently, “bad” times are followed by even worse times. When they seem to get better on their own we say, “Well, we don't need it now. We are doing better.” But, will consistency occur, or was “doing better” a result of some action for a temporary fix? If you have the talent and experience in your organization to provide the needed training or continuing education, then please budget time and resources to get it done. If not, budget for the necessary outsourcing and find the training partner that will assist you in development of your number one investment—your employees.

For you to get the highest ROI (return on investment), you have to account for these three learning requirements:

- 1. Instruction.** Your school needs excellent best practices training; instruction that is up-to-date,

relevant and delivered in the most effective manner for learning (not just for the pocketbook). If you think that providing excellent classroom instruction is all that is needed, you will likely come away unhappy with the result.

- 2. Ownership.** How many seminars have you or your team attended that seemed on point, but a month or so later you or they couldn't remember much of the information? Fifty percent or more will leak out of participants' heads into the pillow at night in the first month alone. A plan must be instituted for retention, to create ownership of the material. It takes

three weeks of solid effort and attention to get rid of an old habit and install a new one. Training is no different.

Work with your trainers to set up a retention plan that will get the job done and be committed to doing it. Remember how important supervision is? Your team leaders must set the right attitude about training and ownership as well as expecting that it will be learned and used.

- 3. Mentoring.** “I have been taught best practices and my supervisor has worked with me on a retention program. I now believe I own the material. There is one problem. I'm not confident that I am using it properly.” There can be a big difference between “owning the training principles” and applying them on the job on a consistent basis. Every organization must be prepared to administer this third

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step in the learning process. After every training and ownership period, help in application must be available or the admissions representative will quickly return to old behaviors or may use the material improperly.

Competition in this industry is significant. Small weaknesses seem to grow overnight. When you hire or engage an inside expert to get the job done, do it right. There is no fun or profit languishing on the doors of success. Training is a necessity. If your admissions representative can't work the computer system, you pro-

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vide training. What about the "mind" skills necessary to get the job done? Since only 3–5 percent of the population has the innate ability to be a superstar, what about the rest? Quality training, meeting all three requirements is the only reasonable answer and it pays big dividends when done right.

Investing in every employee, in every department is fundamental in making your employees feel valued and empowered. Some of the best training we provide to schools embraces skill sets that permeate every department within your school—ultimately elevating each employee. Organizations are amazed that our training programs focused on fundamental business skills provide "ah-ha's" for the education industry that have far reaching impact for its employees and students.

What is your definition of training? Do you know the difference between your new hire training and continuing education? Are you willing to invest in "core" training programs pertinent to every employee as well as technical training? What causes employees to "slip" after training? The questions are important; your response to the answers equally as important. Most important, what is your commitment to investing in your employees? *If you are committed, determine how to do it, and do it with passion and sincerity.*

This wasn't so self-serving after all, was it?