

## Internal Training: The Employer's Competitive Advantage

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**There is no question that the job market is always changing.** And with it, so are the needs of today's employees. That's why we survey our candidates – so we can share the most up-to-date data with nonprofit organizations on what employees want from their employers. Job seekers, future employees, staff looking for an exciting change – each type of professional offers new insights and ideas to help our organizations grow. Along with that, they also have individual needs when it comes to remaining happily engaged in their new or current jobs.

But on the whole, **what does it take for you to be seen as an employer people want to work for?** It may seem obvious, but our past candidate surveys show that not all the answers to these questions come easily, nor are they the most obvious.

From June to August 2016, we surveyed 427 candidates<sup>1</sup> about the type of training they would be most interested in receiving from their employer. Specifically, we asked them: **In what area do you feel you need or needed more training from your current or past employer?** Here are the results:

- Career development – **38%**
- Leadership development – **23%**
- Job related skills – **18%**
- Work-life balance – **12%**
- Personal development – **4%**



Two things are clear from the results. First, that employees want to grow and develop in their current roles. And second, that career development is the clear frontrunner. **Employees want to know where they are headed, whether it be within an organization or a specific career field.** Leadership development is a close second. As leaders begin to retire and more millennials enter the work force, employees (at all levels) see room for advancement and they also have a keen interest in taking on more responsibility at the leadership level. The only catch is that they want to be prepared to do so. Of course, job-related skills remain an important part of an organization's internal training offerings. And while work-life balance and personal development scored the lowest, they still hold great value to employees.

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More than ever employees are willing to share their needs and wants with their employer. They also expect these needs and desires to be met, or at least to be considered. **That said, how can you give employees the training they desire and, at the same time, help your organization flourish?**

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<sup>1</sup> Careers In Nonprofits (CNP) surveyed 427 candidates in Chicago and DC, who either interviewed in our offices or have registered as candidates in our online database.

We will explore further in a bit, but first, let's consider the topic of "Talent Management". Johns Hopkins University defines this fairly new concept as, "a set of integrated organizational HR processes designed to attract, develop, motivate, and retain productive, engaged employees."

While we won't explore Talent Management in depth here, it is worth a mention, as training is a large focus in running a successful talent management program. It can be used as a means to ultimately engage staff and reduce turnover. **Good training is key to retaining staff.** And it's not simply just a function of the HR department – training requires all hands on deck! Managers and leaders should be good trainers, recognize what training staff need (as well as be open to the idea of asking staff what it is they want), and also know what training and development they as leaders need.

So how can this work for you? Understanding and being able to effectively provide the training needs of your staff, is a surefire way to keep them happily engaged in their roles. This in turn will increase retention. And don't you want to keep your key staff fulfilled, growing, and around for multiple years?



### **Career Development:**

Staff at all levels want to know that as they invest their time and energy into a position, they are developing their careers along the way. While motivations may vary (more responsibility, title, salary, etc.), having a clear road map to develop their career is key.

In our CNP Academy Workshop on Career Mapping, we educate employers and employees alike on how to progress on their desired career path. It acts as a GPS to help you get you to where you want to go. Otherwise, you can overlook the most efficient way to go or get stuck in traffic jams along the way. Offering Career Mapping (also known as Career Pathing) is an innovative training technique to help your employees grow in a strategic way within your organization and beyond. By offering this training, employers and employees can more clearly communicate about how an individual's career

development goals can also serve an organization so the employer benefits, too. **By setting short and long-term goals, you can understand the steps necessary to achieve a common goal in the end.** If staff are left in the dark, wondering "what's next," productivity, engagement, and ultimately retention, will all falter. We know the cost of turnover is expensive, and it's a cost we as employers and our donors can avoid.

Once employees and employers understand the direction that they are headed together, additional training opportunities can also be identified for further career development. It's a wonderful way to make the most of the time and resources needed for particular training, helping everyone stay on track, and achieve common goals.

## Leadership Development:



Leadership development involves many tiers and types of training. From our survey, we found that employees at all levels want more leadership development training.

As for our Executives, certifications and Executive coaching are important areas of training employers can offer. In today's market, employers can remain competitive by paying for continued education and professional certifications. In turn, you assist your leaders in developing new skills, gaining more credibility, and remaining aware of best practices. It's crucial for Executive leadership to keep advancing and growing themselves. If they don't, how can they continue to

lead their staff to innovate and grow, as well? **As leaders, we have to set the example, and this involves continuing our personal development and learning.**

As for mid-level staff, there is always opportunity for growth. And even if they are already managing a team of people, this training never ends. With new managers taking on more responsibility, they have to manage a team, but also lead them to greater heights, help them create and achieve career maps of their own, and rally a team together as a means to hit goals. We know from our last survey that staff want a manager who takes the time to invest in their individual professional growth. **Organizations must invest in developing and educating managers so they can handle all that comes along with managing people, and most**

Finally, leadership skills can truly come in handy at all levels within in an organization. Our results showed that learning how to manage up is important to the employees we surveyed. This is a skill everyone should have because ultimately, every employee is responsible for achieving a common goal: helping their organization succeed.

***"23% of employees want more leadership development training, while another 18% of employees want an additional training in skills related to their job."***

## Job-Related Skills:

It may seem obvious, but job-related skill trainings are crucial to employee success. As we interview candidates, year after year, one of the most common areas where staff desire more training in is technical skills. Think about the databases, software, or other technical skills that would be useful to your staff and then consider the trainings you can provide based on that.

Other common trainings mentioned by our candidates, both in interviews and in our survey are public speaking, advance computer skills (design software, Excel), and social media. In an ever-changing world, it's hard to keep up with the latest

technologies and methods of communication, but it's important that we ensure staff feel fully trained in the programs and communication styles prevalent in today's workplace.

Programs and policies are also areas of training employees feel they could use more training in. It's important that employers evaluate on-boarding, as these areas are important to the success of our new hires. **Unfortunately, we fail our staff when we do not fully explain policies and guidelines they are expected to follow.** Training them well on the front-end allows us to see more success later.



### Work-Life Balance and Personal Development:

Work-life balance can mean different things to different people. With the majority of employees desiring more training on such a broad concept, how can you offer this training as an employer? **The simplest, yet perhaps most challenging method is to be the example.** Show employees how to leave work at work and maintain a healthy balance between personal and professional lives. In the digital age, we're more connected than ever, but set the standards. **Show your staff how it can be done!**



In our Q2 White Paper (“It Starts with You: Best Practices for Creating a Happily Engaged Staff”), our candidates said the number one way to keep them happily engaged at work was a manager who invested time in energy in their professional growth. More than ever, we not only need managers who lead by example, but who can help staff create and implement strategies around stress-management, cultivating resilience in the work place, and efficiently resolving any conflict with other team members, donors, or Board Members. The better we can train our staff in these areas and interpersonal skills, the better

they become at leaving work at work and understanding how to deal with challenges at work. This ensures they have the energy they need to tackle problems daily and perform their best.

In our CNP Academy Workshop that focuses on resilience, we point to key evidence that using focused breathing techniques can help employees deal with everyday stresses and remain coherent and sharp throughout their workday. **By offering something as simple as this training, staff can be well-equipped to handle difficult moments.**

Another helpful, but often overlooked training to offer employees is how to best manage their time. This can be the time they have in the office or even the vacation time they take. **As we know, prioritizing is key for managing time efficiently.** Make sure your staff are trained on the most efficient way to get work done and that they know what tasks are a priority. Also, make sure staff know key dates for meetings, conferences, and donor events, so that they can plan vacations accordingly and at appropriate times of the year.

*“When you can inspire team work through simple training, it’s a win-win.”*

Offering nontraditional trainings, such as stress management is another way to cultivate a workplace that promotes healthy work-life balance. Maybe you have a subject-matter expert lead a training; or, if you feel you can be the example, train staff yourself! You could even start a monthly Stress Management group, where staff share ideas, do yoga, or read a book on the subject. It doesn’t have to be expensive or involve lengthy sessions. When you can inspire team work through simple training, it’s a win-win.

At CNP, we believe in hiring the full person – both professionally and personally. When we have offered trainings that help our staff outside of the office, such as personal wealth management and stress management, it’s mutually beneficial. Staff can come to work with more peace of mind, manage their emotions in the moment, and be prepared for whatever comes their way.



**So what's next? Here are a few things to keep in mind as you consider what trainings you should offer internally:**

- **Talk to your staff.** Ask them where they would like more training and understand why.
- Understand **Career Mapping** and how you can make it work for you and your staff. We're here to help if and when the time is right.
- Know when and what type of training is appropriate for staff. **Creating a program** based on position or tenure within an organization can be a helpful way to assess when staff should receive certain training.
- **Don't forget** that staff at all levels can benefit from leadership training.
- Stress management training is key to keeping staff balanced both personally and professionally. **In the end, we all benefit from a harmony between the two.**
- **Know the various learning styles of your staff:** for group trainings, offer something for everyone; for individual trainings, train in a way that will speak best to that employee's learning style.
- **Remember that it starts with you.** Train your managers, set the example for leading a balance work-home life, and empower yourself to continue to grow and stretch.

Use this information and helpful tips to complete missing parts of your Talent Management strategy or to create a comprehensive training program, and you will be sure to help your staff lead a fulfilling professional life. **In today's world, our jobs go beyond a paycheck.** Employees want to feel they are being heard, cared for, and developed in a way that helps them achieve their goals – and we all want to enjoy the process along the way. As employers, we can help our organizations flourish by meeting these training needs and showing our staff the path to achieving their career dreams!

**What's next?** We will share insights on the Talent Management strategies that are most important to employees and how you can implement them within your own organization.

Stay tuned, stay strong, and keep an eye out for our **quarterly white papers.**

