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# *Pressman's Toolbox*

## Is training worth it?

*By Frank Bourlon*

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What if you could save 10 percent in newsprint costs? How about 5 percent? If not that, would saving 1/2 percent be attractive?

If you spend \$1 million annually on newsprint, shaving a mere 1 percent in waste would save you \$10,000. That's an attractive proposition.

What about training? What benefits do you believe you'd get by saving one or two man-hours per week in your prepress, press or postpress areas?

When individuals are not trained properly you surrender not only the man-hours lost by the person who made the mistake but all the man-hours from the other individuals working on the same machine.

That loss can ripple through other departments as well; one mistake can affect as many as 10 or 20 other employees.

If you lost just five man-hours per day due to poorly trained staff you would lose 1,825 man-hours each year. Multiply that by how much you pay each hour in salaries.

It doesn't take too many examples like these before newspapers begin to realize that one of the best returns on investment they can enjoy are those stemming from a solid training program.

Training your staff will save you both time and money. It is evident that new employees make many mistakes. Some say that it is the normal learning experience. Unfortunately, mistakes create a tremendous amount of waste, time lost and equipment damage.

Properly training new employees will significantly improve their ability to perform tasks without making mistakes, thus lowering waste. Training programs also boost the morale of employees by giving them a feeling of self-worth, which will make them more productive.

## Many options

There are a variety of training strategies:

- On-the-job training is an effective technique, but only if properly executed. Merely standing a new employee next to an experienced operator so that the new staffer can watch and learn is not a good training practice. The experienced operator may himself be victim of poor training or poor work habits, all of which might be passed down to the new employee. In this case, training would be a failure.
- Books and manuals are another training tactic. The drawback here, however, is that some individuals don't feel they have the time or inclination to read the material. In addition, the books and manuals may not cover all aspects of the job.
- Seminars conducted at newspaper conferences can also improve the knowledge of operators. But in many cases these educational programs are narrow in scope; time constraints also make it difficult to cover every topic.
- On-site seminars are very useful. Unfortunately, the amount of time devoted to training is limited, in most cases, to just a few hours a day. Thus the amount of knowledge gained can be very limited.

The best training program is one that is organized and continually updated to ensure the quality and technical information remains superior.

Good training programs for operators will boast many opportunities for students to gain hands-on experience. This will allow operators to make and learn from their mistakes without causing excessive waste or lost man-hours.

It is very important that instructors are competent and able to convey their institutional knowledge to the students. Interaction between student and trainer needs to be outstanding as well.

## Measuring savings

Can you measure the amount of savings you get from training your staff? The performance of an individual can be noted before and after a course is conducted to see how the person has improved. Count the number of man-hours lost before and after a good training program. Review the amount of consumables used before and after a training program. Determine if parts purchased or repairs made to equipment have been reduced within a few months after the training had been completed.

A well-trained employee is more likely to be satisfied with the company he works for, which in many cases means he will be less likely to leave

to find a job elsewhere. Remember, good pressmen are very hard to find these days.

Yes, training is worth the time and expense. The payback is not just six months or a year. Instead, it can be a lifetime of service and reduced operating costs.

Finally, training helps you discover new ideas and solutions for reducing cost.

What is a good training program worth to you?

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