

# Untrained Users Are Costly

By Tiffani Bova

June 12, 2006

**Opinion: Despite a growing need, too many organizations don't train their staffs properly, and that is more costly than they realize.**

Escalating complexities in business environments coupled with increased employee responsibilities continue to raise training requirements, yet some companies are not adjusting training budgets accordingly.

Reducing the training budget usually shifts the training burden over to the help desk, which is not an effective use of IT resources, nor is it cost-efficient or particularly satisfying to users. Based on research conducted by Gartner, the effects cascade throughout the entire organization in many ways:

- The untrained or under-trained desktop user will cost *five times* more to support than a well-trained worker.
- **The untrained or under-trained mobile user will cost five to eight times more to support than a well-trained worker.**
- For every hour of user training an IT professional *saves at least five hours* of lost user productivity to the enterprise.
- Untrained users can take *three to six times* longer than trained users to complete the same amount of work.
- In today's competitive environment, knowledge becomes obsolete *in as little as four months*.

Untrained users are a drain on support resources and can contribute to poor employee satisfaction. Finding the balance between "necessary and required training" and "intrusive and gratuitous training" can be tricky. When new vertical or enterprise-specific applications are deployed, decisions should be made on the basis of complexity and criticality.

The more complex and/or critical new applications are, the more critical or mandatory training should become. Without obtaining senior management support for participation, including compliance mandates, training initiatives will fail to gain the traction required for overall project success.

Training organizations are usually treated as cost centers and as a result are underfunded and held overly accountable. Training organizations are not always involved in the business case, funding or ROI measurements of their work, which places them at a significant disadvantage right from the start. Instead, training organizations should be treated like "subcontractors" that negotiate specific SLAs — including budget, metrics and deliverables—in order to ultimately be held accountable.

If channel players currently have a training practice in place, there is a clear opportunity for further investment in enhancing their portfolio to drive additional



revenue. Those without a training practice should continue to focus on core competencies and collaborate or partner with a reputable training company to service customers.

Ignoring the importance and/or value of training to overall project success will only hurt customer satisfaction in the long run. One could say the success of any IT project is measured in two ways: 1) Did the project deliver what was expected and within budget? 2) Are the tools, applications or solutions being used to their maximum potential by users?

The second measurement falls directly on the existence of a funded corporate training curriculum. The best training programs have a dedicated staff to assess requirements and develop curricula. Ideally, there should be tight integration between the help desk (which may ultimately end up supporting users after the trainers are gone) and the training staff.

Both the support and training teams should be involved with the development and selection of course materials. It is helpful to generate reports from the help desk and review how-to questions with the training department to assess problem areas that may require more training. This exercise creates a benchmark to measure the effectiveness of new training programs, such as the number of calls dropped as a result of the training. It is also important to look at the complexity of the calls, which may increase as users get more sophisticated.

Since there is no single best way to deliver training, identifying and agreeing on requirements upfront will ensure success. Start these conversations as early as you can in the implementation process so any roadblocks can be resolved prior to the official launch of the solution.

The bottom line is it doesn't matter how much money was spent, or how many people it took to install, or how cutting edge your company is by having it. If your employees don't know how to maximize productivity by utilizing the new IT solution, and ultimately improving revenue, why exactly did you do it?

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