

Ethics training: what's the ROI!

A company could spend thousands on an ethics training program that has no effect on its employees. Especially in this challenging economy, people want to know, what is the ROI for an ethics training program? While the answer is debatable...I mean, how do you quantify the ethical infractions that DIDN'T happen? I certainly understand the concern for provable results for a program like this. I encourage you to take a deeper at your actual training module to determine what results it could yield. I argue that if the training incorporates the essential elements that results will be obvious and will be felt throughout the entire organization!

I am tired of seeing the effects of ineffective ethics training. After 20 years in this business, I have determined that successful ethics training has common ingredients. The most important ingredient is ongoing training, not just a one-time keynote without any follow up communication, training or reinforcement. This is only giving lip service to ethics and cheapens its importance.

Another ingredient is that the training must be varied in order to make more relatable to people's experience, i.e. tools to analyze case studies, monthly department meetings tackling an ethics issue with communal wisdom, an ethics newsletter, highlighting things done right, and so on.

Another ingredient is that face-to-face training is integral to incorporation of ideas. Online training can only do so much and go so far. It is in the interaction that true wisdom can evidence itself in the discussions of participants.

Why does ethics training fail? There are many answers to this question.....Maybe the two hours of ethics training a year is not enough to make a difference? Maybe the training content is not relevant to employees' daily responsibilities? Could it be that it's purely web-based and seeks to be compliant rather than effective? Maybe it's a great showdown but does not have the buy in or respect of participants. Does the training speak frankly to what are the real hot buttons facing employees?

An ongoing program that addresses ethical leadership, moral awareness, and decision making is a must! A program that speaks frankly to the heart of the matter and that can relate ethical behavior to participants' daily lives will be much more effective and will yield results for the long term! An ethics training program that provides the tools to create an ethical climate is the only way to approach ethics training!

Ethics training is not just a nicety that looks good to everyone else! It's a necessity if you want to decrease the odds of ethical problems before they become a potentially expensive legal problem, a public relations nightmare or a trauma to employee morale. How much would you invest to preserve your company's reputation, growth and profits? We have seen seemingly indestructible Fortune 500 companies collapse due to one major ethical violation, on a regular basis for the last few years! Let me ask....What are you doing to maintain your organization's ethical culture?