

# Invest in Training

By [Davon Cook](#)

In my experience, most family businesses underinvest in developing their team's technical and interpersonal skills via training and learning opportunities (and by the way, that *team* includes you, too). Effective training is a large topic, not likely to be solved in one newsletter article. But consider these points as you reflect on the adequacy and success of this investment.

**Focus on why training matters.** What are you hoping to accomplish? There is the obvious goal of equipping an employee to efficiently and safely complete a task with desired quality. There's also a bigger picture goal of continually adapting to a constantly evolving world. A recent Harvard Business Review article states, "The only way for organizations to ensure their workforces are fully productive and able to achieve business goals is to make sure employees are *continuously learning*, so that they are driving the business forward." This challenges us to think of training as an *ongoing habit*, not a *onetime event*.

**Reflect on what content is needed.** In addition to your own brainstorming, ask your employees to help identify areas in which they need additional knowledge or skill development. This should be part of regular conversation about their performance and their future goals. In this conversation, include not just technical skills but also interpersonal and leadership skill development.

**Decide where to access the right tools.** You should consider utilizing external sources like classes, workshops, and webinars as well as your own internal training. Don't undervalue how much technical knowledge can be shared internally if you're intentional about it. This can vary from shadowing an expert, utilizing Standard Operating Procedures, demonstrations by other employees, or creating your own video segments. In my next column I will discuss more about structuring your own internal training efforts.

For interpersonal and leadership development needs, look all around you for opportunities. Besides big name national workshops (e.g. Dale Carnegie, SkillPath), your community college or Small Business Administration may offer leadership development courses aimed at working professionals. Some vendors recognize their customers' need to access management training; they offer management minicourses. And we at Ag Progress have leadership development courses specialized for you and your employees.

While training is a big topic, take a few minutes to do a gut check on whether your organization is devoting the time and attention needed for *you and your team* to be lifelong learners.