



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Take Responsibility for Your Own Personal and Professional Development

There are many employees who complain about how their company does not provide enough training for them. People sometimes feel like they are stuck in their current job and are not able to learn new things. On the surface, you might agree with these people. After all, if your company wants you to do a good job, why wouldn't they want you to be well-trained? Attending training is also a motivating factor. So, why wouldn't they want you to be motivated?

Well, many of you know the answer. Your company would love you to be highly trained, and they want you to have good morale, but they don't always invest in training for their people. Some companies do not have a learning culture and don't understand the payback from training. Other companies don't have the funding to send people to the outside classes that everyone wants to attend. In many cases, employees would like training in fun stuff or new technology that is not applicable to their current jobs. Employers have a hard time seeing how that makes sense.

So, what's an employee (or a contractor) to do?

The first thing you need to come to grips with is that you are responsible for your personal development. It's not your company's responsibility, it's not your spouse's responsibility and it's not your mother's responsibility - your personal development is your own personal responsibility.

Have you ever talked to a prospective new employer about your skills, or lack of skills? Some prospective employees do not have an attractive set of skills for the market, and they may blame this on the fact that their previous employer never sent them to training. Now, however, it really does not do any good to talk about what their old employer did or did not do. The matter at hand is their skills.

With layoffs a fact of life for a number of years now, this message is becoming more and more clear to people. Everyone is in charge of his/her own development. Sure, your current company can help, and in many cases, they will have learning resources available to you. However, ultimately the responsibility is yours.

You are responsible

Once you come to the realization that your development is your responsibility, you can start to make proactive decisions that will have a positive impact on your personal and professional development. Many items can help you with this, including:

Magazines. It helps to read technical and industry magazines on a weekly and monthly basis. CIO, Baseline, PMNetwork, InformationWeek, Application Development Trends, Computer Shopper, Projects@Work are some examples of good technical reading material, but there are many others. In addition, Newsweek, National Geographic,



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Entrepreneur, Money and other magazines will help you keep up on what's going on in the world. Most of the IT magazines are available for free. Take advantage of them!

Reading books – both technical and managerial. Just because your employer does not provide a book does not mean it is not worth reading for your own personal development.

Attending free seminars and webinars. Again, there are a lot of these events that are free. Vendors are always offering free seminars and webinars. It just takes some of your time to attend.

Mentoring. Talk to people who have skills in areas that you do not. Ask them to explain what they are doing. If it is new technology, ask them to explain how it works. Most people love talking about what they do and are glad to comply.

Self-teach classes and Computer Based Training (CBTs). Most companies have computer based training or videos available. Large companies usually have big libraries of them. Take advantage of them to learn new things or new skills that will help you in your job.

Ask for training. If you think that training would help you in some aspect of your job, ask your manager. About 80% of all employees never step back and see what types of training might help them in their jobs. Companies usually have some money available for training. They want to spend it where it will do the most good. If you think you could use training in an area that will help the company, and if you can come back and apply the training on your job, go ahead and propose it to your boss.

Other. There are other opportunities for personal development - just use your imagination. This includes joining professional associations, internet training, attending night classes, listening to speakers at your local college, distance learning, etc.

Summary – take action

Don't be the kind of person that never thinks proactively about training, but then blames his/her manager and company for not training him/her. In fact, companies should take an interest in developing their people. However, whether they do or don't does not change the fact that ultimately, you are responsible for your own personal development. No one is going to take you by the hand and groom you to one day be the CIO.

Once you understand that you are responsible for your personal development, you can start to become more conscious of the learning opportunities all around you, including books, magazines, the Internet, CBTs, etc. Of course, there are also the expensive instructor-led classes that everyone likes to attend. Look for any and all of these types of opportunities. No one can learn everything, but learn as much as you can. Make learning a part of your routine. You will be much happier, much more knowledgeable and much more employable. Don't wait for others – take responsibility now!