

Ergonomics Train-the-Trainer Tips

In these challenging economic times, many organizations are looking to train their in-house staff on ergonomics as a way to save costs. This philosophy can prove beneficial if certain steps are taken to make sure your employees are getting the most valuable and practical training available. Having your personnel understand ergonomics and how to identify ergonomic risk can be a vital component to an effective ergonomics program.



Here are some tips when considering Train-the-Trainer workshops for your employees:

Step 1: Identify the Right Employees to Attend

Before you arrange a Train-the-Trainer workshop for your employees, you will need to identify personnel to attend. Because this type of training can be more costly and time intensive than a Basic Awareness training, you will need to identify which employees would benefit the most from this training; and will provide the most value to your organization because of it. Some options to consider when identifying the correct employees include:

- Will this employee be an ergonomic champion for your organization?
- Does this employee interact effectively with others?
- Will this employee have the time to dedicate to this project?

Just because an individual shows an interest in a project does not necessarily mean they are the right person for the job. Having an individual conducting basic ergonomic or high level risk assessments for your organization means that they will have to be able to easily deal with other employees and have the time to conduct these assessments. Ergonomics is fitting the worker to the workplace, which means that people involved in ergonomics will be involved not only with the *workplace* but the *worker* first and foremost.

Step 2: Verify that the Training is Applicable to Your Industry

Before engaging in a Train-the-Trainer workshop, make sure that the organization you hire to conduct the training understands your industry. Many ergonomics training companies have a specialty in one area and may not be able to apply ergonomics concepts to other industries. When conducting a Train-the-Trainer workshop, it is imperative that the trainer provide *real world examples* that can be used by your staff once they have completed this training. Some things to consider:

- Does the training organization have a varied resume of training engagements?



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- Has the training organization conducted training for companies in your industry?
- Can the training organization visit your site beforehand to take photos and make observations of your job tasks and processes?

Be wary of large companies that sell off the shelf training programs. Many times these “canned” courses are too general to be effective. A good train-the-trainer program will outline specifics about your company so that your people will be able to take abstract concepts and apply them to your setting.

Step 3: Make Sure the Trainer Provides a Hands-on Experience

In a Train-the-Trainer workshop, it is essential to offer your employees a hands-on experience so they can walk away with practical knowledge. Make sure that your trainer will provide an interactive experience that will enhance your employee’s understanding of the concepts. Such things as **mock evaluations, product demonstrations and group problem solving exercises** are some of the best ways to enhance the learning experience.

Often, very experienced ergonomics professionals will present training in a very academic way, as if teaching a course in college. Although this is valuable, when you are looking to provide employees with information they can apply immediately into their work, you need to have tangible take-aways in the form of experience. At Pelletier & Associates, we are not only well versed in the concepts of ergonomics, our training focuses on adult learning theories that make training more engaging and thus, more effective.

Step 4: Confirm that Your Employees Will Have Tools After the Training

Participating in a Train-the-Trainer workshop will provide employees with an overview of ergonomics and how to reduce ergonomic risk in the work environment. But how about when they leave the training room? Will your employees retain all the new information they have learned? One way to help them in that retention process is to provide them with materials. But books and handouts are only so effective. It is better to provide employees with tools they can use in identifying ergonomic risk. These tools include **checklists, product guides and sample reports** to follow. Instructing your employees to begin the task of identifying and dealing with ergonomic risks in the workplace is one thing; providing them the necessary tools they need to do the job is another.

At Pelletier & Associates we are very clear about the importance of training materials, and spend a great deal of time customizing our handouts to the industry we are training.



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Summary

To maximize the value of training to your organization, it is important that you make sure the training program offered to your employees is effective. By clearly properly identifying the right employees, verifying the applicability of the training to your industry, finding a trainer that can provide a hands-on experience and confirming that your employees will leave the training with the tools to be effective you can maximize your training dollars. And in this tight economy, stretching your organization's budget is a definite must.

Pelletier & Associates specializes in assisting organizations in the delivery of ergonomics services. We provide ergonomics training and consulting services, as well as ergonomics policy and program development. Our experience spans 20+ years in disability management, workers' compensation and return-to-work environments. From office settings to manufacturing, Pelletier & Associates has the experience to help guide your organization to becoming a safer, more productive workplace.