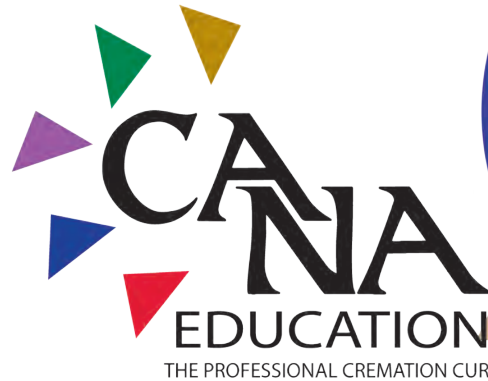


Ensuring Business Success Through Professional Development

By Jennifer Head
CANAs Director of Education



Do you have a budget for training and development? If you do, is it only for mandatory training required for maintaining licensure? If you answered no to the first question, or yes to the second question, read on.

Sadly, there are many individuals and business owners in the funeral industry who pay for continuing education classes only because they have to, and they don't really care whether the program they take will help improve the business. As long as they or their employees earn the continuing education credits they need to renew their license, that's all that matters. But what if the money spent on that required continuing education could actually help boost your bottom line? It should. If it doesn't, you're wasting your money.

Successful companies, regardless of industry, know that training and development (T&D), as well as succession planning and all

areas related to workforce development, should be an integral part of your business strategy. Your people are your most important asset, and as such should receive a comparable amount of attention.

What do successful companies do? They outline all of the knowledge, skills and abilities a person needs to be successful in a given job or job area (also known as a competency model). Training dollars are then focused on filling the gaps between the skills they have and those they need; since the competencies are tied to business goals, you are spending money on personnel development that will directly impact the bottom line.

These models are also then used in succession planning. When you have them available for all positions, employees know what is expected of them, especially if they want to be promoted or move to a different position in the company. When hiring new employees, the models help you identify what training you may or may not need to provide if you hire a particular person.

If improving the bottom line isn't enough motivation to focus on T&D, it is also clear that providing continual opportunities for development and advancement is a key component in employee engagement, and helps reduce turnover. Facing an impending loss of staff due to retirement? It's no secret that a skills gap exists between what employers need and the skills many of our future employees have. Getting new employees in and up to speed quickly will be imperative. That means preparing now through well-thought-out succession and T&D plans.

"But wait," you say. "Paying for training classes is one thing. Paying for the additional travel expenses to send employees away for a day or two, in addition to the lost work time, adds additional financial burden." Yes, it does, and there are several responses to that issue.

First, consider that the long-term payoff of having well-trained staff more than covers the classes, the travel expenses, and the lost work time (or it should, if you choose quality training programs). Properly trained and qualified staff generally leads to lower legal risk, which is priceless. Ask anyone who has been sued. And finally, quality online continuing education programs are a great option.

CANA Education Online offers cremation-specific education, in an easily digestible format and designed with the sole purpose of ensuring the transfer of that learning directly to the

workplace for improved performance. One example is the *Phone Shopper* course. Learners are immersed in actual cremation phone shopper calls and have to choose the correct responses to customer questions. Practicing new skills in a safe environment is a key to quality training. And since these courses are available on-demand 24/7/365, employees can work the training into their ever busy schedules whenever time allows. As an added bonus, some free content will be available soon as well.

Visit www.cremationassociation.org/eduonline to learn more about our new online courses. 



A former high school science teacher, Jennifer Head began working for the American Foundry Society in 2005 after receiving her Master's Degree in Education. She was responsible for the administration and operations of the AFS Institute's programs and facilities, and initiated a complete redesign of Institute programming, including both classroom and online courses. A Certified Professional in Learning and

Performance (CPLP), she brings to CANA a wealth of experience in best practices for workplace learning.