



KNOW YOUR TRAINING AUDIENCE.

ENGAGE YOUR STAKEHOLDERS – WHO AND HOW?

A first step in any business endeavor is to know your audience. In the realm of technical training, a bigger characterization of “audience” is necessary. Stakeholders at multiple levels throughout the organization must be engaged, beyond those who will receive training. Executives, technical leaders, technical experts, managers and employees all have different expectations and needs regarding training as well as different contributions to training.

The “What’s in it for me?” is typically different for each of these stakeholders depending on where they sit in the organization, their role and expertise, among other factors. While there may be exceptions, executives want to know that technical training directly supports the business strategy and will yield tangible and cost effective results. Technical leaders want responsive and timely support for new products, technology and services during critical stages of development. Technical experts expect technical training to be detailed, high quality, accurate and complete. Managers want their people to have the right skills at the right time, delivered in an effective manner with minimal time away from the job. Employees expect technical training to be highly relevant and immediately applicable to the job.

An organized effort to engage stakeholders yields many benefits:

- Better access to new information and ideas
 - Increased collaboration and innovation
 - Enhanced decision making
 - Increased quality and relevance of technical training solutions
 - Reduction in roadblocks to implementation
- Proven methods for reaching out to stakeholders include structured interviews, focus groups, surveys and needs assessment techniques. While these methods can yield highly valuable data and information, ongoing relationship building and “delivering on the promise” of training are essential.
- As the training organization builds its credibility and delivers training, stakeholders will want to see the impact of training. Executives will be interested in strategic training programs, costs, projected future costs and outcomes. Technical leaders and experts will want to see the training roadmap for a specific product line, technical area or function. Managers will want to know who needs to attend training. Employees will want to know their options for completing training.
- Engaging stakeholders is just the beginning. If managed well, stakeholders can actively and vehemently support technical training at every stage of the training life cycle from strategy, prioritization, funding, and content development to training delivery increasing its impact.
- Wendy Combs and Bettina Davis are the co-authors of “Demystifying Technical Training: Partnership, Strategy and Execution” (Wiley Pfeiffer). E-mail [Wendy](#) and [Bettina](#).*
- Increased focus on business problems and priorities
 - Assistance to obtain funding and resources, including technical expertise