

WORKPLACE
LITERACY

Best Practices Reader

1998

Répertoire des meilleures pratiques

D'ALPHABÉTISATION

AU TRAVAIL



The Conference Board of Canada
Le Conference Board du Canada



Human Resources
Development Canada

Développement des
ressources humaines Canada



The Conference Board of Canada

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*National
Literacy
Secretariat*



*Le Secrétariat
national à
l'alphabétisation*

Please Note

The descriptions are provided
in the language in which
they were submitted.

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1998 AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN WORKPLACE LITERACY

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I NTRODUCTION

The Conference Board of Canada is pleased to present the first Awards for Excellence in Workplace Literacy sponsored by the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources Development Canada. These awards are designed to:

- Recognize and reward innovative and effective workplace literacy programs
- Raise awareness of the value of workplace literacy to business, employees and the community.



What is workplace literacy?

The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), a seven-country comparative study of adult literacy defines literacy as: "Using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential."

Workplace literacy is a relative rather than absolute concept, involving prose, document and quantitative proficiencies in the languages in which business is conducted.

Why is workplace literacy important?

Today, as never before, our country's economic and social well-being depends on our capacity to make the most effective use of our people and to maintain the skills of our workforce.

Technology and global developments have put us in a fiercely competitive marketplace. At the same time, the growing complexity of jobs in Canadian

workplaces increases the demands being placed on workers. For many, the literacy skills that earlier enabled them to do their jobs effectively are not sufficient for today.

And, as the Canadian IALS report points out, literacy skills are not “fixed” forever—individuals can lose skills after they leave school, through lack of use, or they can gain skills through practice and additional training. Employees need to be lifelong learners.

Ultimately, enhancing literacy levels in the workplace:

- Improves bottom-line performance for Canada’s employers
- Gives employees a better chance for success in their careers
- Helps Canada achieve a high and sustainable quality of life.

This Reader

This workplace literacy best-practices reader profiles 26 exemplary workplace literacy programs and highlights the benefits to business and to employees. The profiles are organized by the category in which they entered the competition. All are in the language in which they were submitted to the Conference Board.

Selection of the winners was based on a number of factors including: originality and innovation; proven and sustained business involvement; evidence of collaboration between employer and employees; demonstrated correlation between objectives and results; positive effect on participants; and replicability.

The Conference Board thanks the sponsors, the businesses that submitted entries, and the judges whose insights shaped this reader. We commend all participants on their commitment to workplace literacy.

I NTRODUCTION

Le Conference Board du Canada est fier de présenter les premiers Prix d'excellence pour l'alphabétisation au travail, lesquels sont parrainés par le Secrétariat national à l'alphabétisation, Développement des ressources humaines Canada. Ces prix visent à :

- reconnaître et récompenser les programmes d'alphabétisation au travail qui se révèlent innovateurs et efficaces
- aider les entreprises, les employés et la communauté à prendre conscience de la valeur de l'alphabétisation au travail.

*Le Secrétariat
national à
l'alphabétisation*



*National
Literacy
Secretariat*

Qu'est-ce que l'alphabétisation au travail?

L'Enquête internationale sur l'alphabétisation des adultes (EIAA), une étude comparative portant sur l'alphabétisation des adultes dans sept pays, définit l'alphabétisation ainsi : « Savoir utiliser l'information imprimée ou écrite pour évoluer dans la société, pour atteindre ses objectifs, et pour développer ses connaissances et son potentiel ».

L'alphabétisation au travail constitue un concept relatif plutôt qu'absolu. Elle fait appel à une bonne compréhension des textes suivis, des textes schématiques et des textes au contenu quantitatif, et ce, pour les langues dans lesquelles les affaires sont traitées.

Pourquoi l'alphabétisation au travail est-elle importante?

Aujourd'hui plus que jamais, le bien-être économique et social de notre pays exige que nous sachions mettre notre main-d'œuvre à contribution et poursuivre le perfectionnement de ses compétences.

La technologie et l'évolution mondiale nous ont plongés dans un marché extrêmement concurrentiel.

En outre, la complexité croissante des emplois dans les marchés de travail canadiens impose aux travailleurs des exigences de plus en plus fortes. Pour bien des gens, les capacités de lecture et d'écriture qui leur avaient permis d'accomplir leur travail efficacement jusqu'à maintenant ne sont tout simplement plus suffisantes.

Et comme le mentionne le rapport de l'EIAA, les capacités de lecture et d'écriture ne sont jamais complètement acquises — les gens peuvent perdre leurs aptitudes, faute de pratique après avoir quitté l'école, ou ils peuvent acquérir des compétences grâce à la pratique et à la formation complémentaire. Les employés ont intérêt à poursuivre un apprentissage permanent.

Au bout du compte, la promotion de l'alphabétisation au travail :

- augmente les bénéfices des employeurs canadiens
- favorise la réussite professionnelle des employés
- aide le Canada à atteindre et à maintenir un indice élevé de la qualité de la vie.

Ce Répertoire

Ce Répertoire des meilleures pratiques d'alphabétisation au travail dresse les profils de 26 programmes d'alphabétisation au travail et souligne les avantages pour les entreprises et pour les employés. Ces profils sont classés selon la catégorie dans laquelle ils ont été inscrits. Chaque profil est publié dans la langue correspondant à celle de la candidature.

Le choix des lauréats était fondé sur plusieurs facteurs, notamment : originalité et innovation; intervention commerciale éprouvée et régulière; collaboration entre employeur et employés; démonstration d'un rapport entre les résultats et les objectifs; effet positif sur les participants; et reproductibilité.

Le Conference Board du Canada remercie les commanditaires, les entreprises qui ont soumis des candidatures, et les juges dont les idées ont influencé la rédaction de ce répertoire. Nous félicitons tous les participants pour leur engagements à l'égard de l'alphabétisation au travail.

JUDGES

FOR THE **1998 WORKPLACE LITERACY**

Gerald Fedchun

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Automotive Parts Manufacturing Association of Canada

Sheila Simard

Career Programs Co-ordinator

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Maurice Taylor

Professor

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JUGES

DU **PROGRAMME VISANT**
L'ALPHABÉTISATION AU TRAVAIL (1998)

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S MALL **B**USINESS
LITERACY **I**NIATIVES

I NIATIVES
D'ALPHABÉTISATION
AU SEIN D'UNE
PETITE ENTREPRISE

WINNER

RUSSEL METALS INC.

Russel Metals Inc. is enhancing its employees' skill levels in reading, writing and mathematics to ensure efficient plant operation and success in training its employees to the standards required by the recently implemented ISO 9000 Quality Assurance Program. Russel Metals also needs to ensure that its workers can adjust to constantly evolving new technology in work processes and workplace literacy.

In the past, Russel Metals did not set minimum educational requirements for entry level positions involving labour and/or machinery operation duties. Through the Workplace Education Programs, ISO quality assurance standards are upgraded annually and employees must take training modules to ensure that they can perform to the new standards.

Innovativeness

The implementation of ISO 9000 could easily have been perceived as a threat to employees but came to be seen as a benefit when it was implemented alongside a workplace literacy program. Twenty-six of Russel Metals' 70 employees have participated in workplace education and 60 per cent of these participants have earned their General Education Development (GED) certificate. Instruction is delivered in a highly individualized way: participants set their own learning objectives and work at their own pace and level.

Benefits

Benefits to employer

- Increased success in job-related training programs
- Reduced error rates, as well as reduced turnover rates
- Improved morale

Benefits to employees

- Improved communications and teamwork skills
- Increased self-confidence, taking more ownership of their work
- Feel they are being developed as individuals and not just as workers

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VALLEY VIEW VILLA

Valley View Villa, encourages workplace literacy by borrowing money to buy computers at a discount and allowing its staff members to purchase these computers through payroll deductions. Valley View Villa also shares the cost of computer courses taken by its employees. Valley View Villa recognizes the educational achievements of its staff every spring and 10 staff members completed their GED programs in the past year. Valley View Villa also trains some seniors to assist others in community outreach programs, including nutrition, fitness, Seniors Helping Seniors and Wellness Awareness.

Innovativeness

In all of these programs, Valley View Villa builds on the abilities of its staff members and encourages them to strive for greater educational achievements. By recognizing their abilities and achievements and by ensuring a constant learning atmosphere in the workplace, Valley View Villa builds up its staff members' self-confidence, enabling them to reach higher educational goals.

Benefits

Benefits to employer

- Increased productivity
- Reduced staff turnover rates
- Enhanced corporate image projected by staff

Benefits to employees

- More creative about getting work done
- Inspire their children to succeed at school
- Find inevitable changes in the workplace less traumatic

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MEDIUM BUSINESS
LITERACY INITIATIVES

INITIATIVES
D'ALPHABÉTISATION AU
SEIN D'UNE ENTREPRISE
DE TAILLE MOYENNE

WINNER

HONEYWELL LIMITED

Honeywell Limited's Scarborough factory, which manufactures heating and cooling valves, developed a Learning for Life program in 1990 to improve productivity and quality and reduce costs in an effort to remain competitive in an increasingly competitive global economy. Honeywell introduced computer-based manufacturing systems and encouraged the use of self-directed work teams to achieve its objectives.

Honeywell realized that factory rejuvenation could only be successful if it first addressed the needs of its employees, especially with regard to their skill levels, knowledge and the decision-making environment of the workplace. Eighty percent of the Scarborough factory's employees have participated in the company's Learning for Life program. By improving its employees' skills and restructuring its decision-making environment, Honeywell has increased its factory throughput by 180 per cent and improved the quality of its products by 92 percent.

Innovativeness

By developing its employees literacy skills, Honeywell's *Learning for Life* program develops more productive employees, happier people and better citizens.

Benefits

Benefits to employer

- Employees suggest and implement ways to increase productivity and improve quality of products while reducing costs
- Initiated cycle of enhanced employee morale, increased participation in decision-making and increased productivity

Benefits to employees

- Carry their improved communications skills into home and community life
- Take ownership of, and are accountable for, entire manufacturing processes and the quality of the products that come out of these processes without policing by inspectors

Contact

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ALTA STEEL

AltaSteel, a steelmaking mill that uses recycled scrap steel as raw material launched its workplace literacy program in 1996 to enhance its employees' literacy and employability skills, including their mathematical, computer, problem-solving, teamwork and English-language reading, writing, speaking skills. Its aim is to enhance its employees' foundation skills to make them more flexible in the face of the changes in the workplace. Wrought by the introduction of new technology and more successful in other in-house training this program assists in meeting their own personal needs and the needs of members of their family not addressed by the community at large.

Since its inception, 39 per cent of the AltaSteel workforce has dropped into the company's learning centre to take advantage of the workplace literacy training the company offers and 25 members of employees' families have availed themselves of learning centre resources.

Innovativeness

AltaSteel's innovativeness lies chiefly in its use of generalized employability and workplace literacy skills enhancement to increase the effectiveness of in-house training and to maximize the benefits deriving from off-site training. Management and labour cooperate to recruit learners from AltaSteel's workforce for training that is beneficial both to themselves and to the company.

Benefits

Benefits to employer

- Improved in-house off-site training outcomes
- Development of a stronger learning culture

Benefits to employees

- Enhanced self-confidence, employability and workplace literacy skills and employment prospects within the company
- Openness of learning centre to participation by members of employees' families reinforces employee learning

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AVON FOODS INC.

Avon Foods Inc., a food processing and canning plant, and one of the largest employers in a rural Nova Scotia community, developed a workplace literacy program to help create a better educated workforce and prepare its own employees to meet the challenges of technological change. Avon Foods' primary objective in delivering workplace literacy training to its employees was to enable them to take advantage of other training opportunities that would benefit the company.

Since its inception in 1991, 74 Avon Foods employees have participated in the company's workplace education programs and 32 of these employees have passed all or some of the 5 high school equivalency or General Educational Development tests.

Innovativeness

The innovativeness of Avon Foods' workplace literacy program is the manner in which the company has altered its objectives in response to the changing needs of labour and management and to build on unintended benefits of operating the program. By investing in a workplace literacy program Avon Foods is engendering a culture of lifelong learning among its employees, which they impart to their families and that benefits the community at large.

Benefits

Benefits to employer

- Enhanced employee performance in other training programs
- Enhanced employee adaptability to continuous technological change in the plant

Benefits to employees

- Become independent and confident learners better able to serve their own needs
- Earn high school equivalency

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BRUNSWICK SMELTING DIVISION NORANDA MINING & EXPLORATION INC.

Noranda Mining and Exploration Inc.'s Brunswick Smelting Division launched its workplace literacy program in 1994 to help its employees understand, accept and adapt to changes within the plant. In particular, Brunswick Smelting Division's program is designed to enhance its employees reading skills to enable them to read safety signs, memoranda, training manuals and job postings. Brunswick Smelting Division also expects to help employees and their spouses to better cope at home and in their everyday lives.

Learners work at their own pace and on their own time in an informal environment. Brunswick Smelting Division recognizes its learners achievements in the company newsletter and at an annual ceremony.

Innovativeness

Management has become more aware of, and responsive to, the needs of its employees. For example, Brunswick Smelting Division now reviews hardware and software problems with its employees and adapts computers and their programs to meet the needs of its employees.

Benefits

Benefits to employer

- Employees now have the confidence to take on on-the-job training
- Employees make use of computers to send feedback to management
- Employees now rely less on others in tasks that require literacy skills

Benefits to employees

- Complete requirements for their Grade 12 equivalency diploma
- Use computers to put in for overtime, vacation time and to bank time
- Better able to help their children with their school work

Contact

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COOPÉRATIVE FORESTIÈRE PETIT PARIS

Fondée en 1968 grâce à la fusion de deux organismes, la Coopérative a connu une progression importante. Son chiffre d'affaires a triplé depuis cinq ans et au cours de cette période, l'entreprise a diversifié ses activités, ajoutant aux opérations forestières traditionnelles, l'aménagement forestier et la transformation du bois dans deux secteurs. Pour faire face à cette nouvelle réalité, les membres de l'organisation doivent notamment changer leurs mentalités et s'assurer de posséder les aptitudes de base qui permettent d'apprendre, c'est-à-dire, les éléments de base : savoir lire, écrire et compter. Au début, ce n'était pas le cas à la Coopérative, et ils ont dû faire face à une résistance de la part des travailleurs.

Caractère innovateur

Certains travailleurs ont perçu les compétences de base comme une restriction qui diminue les possibilités d'avancement des membres les plus anciens, ces derniers étant les moins scolarisés. Aussi, plusieurs travailleurs ont appris sur le tas et leurs pères ont travaillé toute leur vie dans la forêt sans posséder le moindre diplôme.

Un obstacle majeur est aussi apparu à l'usine spécialisée où les travailleurs manquaient les compétences requises dans ce nouveau domaine de sciage et de mécanique d'entretien industrielle. En réponse à ce problème, la Coopérative a développé un programme de compétences de base qui n'est pas obligatoire.

Avantages

Avantages pour l'employeur

- fait prendre conscience de la nécessité et de l'importance d'une formation de base solide
- peut mieux répondre aux changements technologiques et nouvelles conditions des marchés

Avantages pour les employés

- a plus de confiance dans leur possibilité d'avancement
- met les efforts nécessaires et possède la volonté de poursuivre leur apprentissage

Personnes-Ressources

Gervais Bérubé

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CROSSLEY CARPET MILLS LTD.

Crossley Carpet Mills Ltd. launched a workplace education program in 1995 to enhance its employees' skills and give interested employees a chance to earn their Grade 12 equivalency diploma; to prepare its workforce for the introduction of new technology and ISO 2000; to enhance its employees' self-confidence and their willingness to apply for in-house jobs; and, to prepare its employees to pass a mathematics test now administered to all new employees but necessary for existing employees, to apply for certain positions in the plant.

Since its inception, 40 Crossley employees have participated in the company's Workplace Education Program, 13 of whom have earned their GED diploma. This is significant as it is unlikely that these employees would have looked or gone elsewhere to enhance their skills. The instructor of the program is developing a curriculum that will be shared with other workplaces.

Innovativeness

Crossley's innovativeness lies chiefly in the efforts of its instructor to customize learning activities for the workplace environment rather than merely "teaching to the test." Mathematics, for example, is taught with particular reference to making carpet.

Benefits

Benefits to employer

- Enhanced work performance
- Improved Enhanced attendance records
- Improved morale and enhanced adaptability

Benefits to employees

- Enhanced life skills, including communications skills
- Enhanced potential for advancement within the company

Contact

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FRASER PAPERS INC.

Fraser Papers Inc., a sawmill and chipping plant introduced a workplace education program in 1993 to give its employees the reading and writing skills they need to do their jobs more effectively and keep pace with the demands imposed by technological change. Fraser Papers realized that maintaining its competitiveness depended not only on replacing old equipment with more sophisticated equipment but also on ensuring that its employees had the skills and confidence to operate in a new workplace environment.

Employees need assistance reading and understanding workplace signs and manuals and writing out work orders, time sheets and memos.

Against the background of one employee admitting to the mill manager that he could not read and write, it is noteworthy that 3 participants in Fraser Papers' workplace literacy program have already passed their Grade 12 equivalency or General Education Department exams and three more will write them in 1998.

Innovativeness

Fraser Papers partly reimburses employees for the wages its employees lose while participating in its workplace literacy program. Employees are expected to give back some of their personal time cleaning the mill; participating in the Joint Health & Safety Committee; or investing additional time in the workplace education program.

Benefits

Benefits to employer

- Maintain competitiveness
- Ensure employee safety

Benefits to employees

- Enhanced morale, self-confidence and communications skills
- Improved quality of life with families

Contact

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MACMILLAN BLOEDEL LTD.

The New West Division of MacMillan Bloedel launched a Skill Enhancement Training (SET) program following a grievance meeting in 1992. A senior incumbent machine operator was refused a job on the basis that a recent machine upgrade required the successful candidate to read a computer trouble screen. Management and labour now work cooperatively to develop literacy in a changing workplace and ensure long term secure employment for the workforce.

SET was developed on the basis of assessing the needs of MacMillan Bloedel's employees. Instruction in reading, writing, mathematical and computer skills is delivered in an adult-learner-sensitive way. Specific learning activities and the actual pace of instruction is geared to skill levels of individual learners and results are kept in the strictest confidence. SET is designed to engender a taste for life-long learning.

Innovativeness

SET has attracted 225 of the division's 350 employees since its inception in 1994. The program is perceived to be so useful to employees that participants invested more than 1400 hours of their own time to working with their instructors in addition to the time they spend engaged in self-study activities.

Benefits

Benefits to employer

- Enhanced productivity
- Improved safety
- Faster recovery

Benefits to employees

- Develop a thirst for learning
- Assist their children with their school homework
- Develop more positive attitudes towards their jobs

Contact

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MOBIL CHEMICAL CANADA, LTD.

Mobil Chemical Canada, Ltd., a manufacturer and distributor of plastic packaging materials in partnership with the Hastings Prince Edward Roman Catholic School is developing the mathematics, English and basic computer skills of its employees. Mobil also helps its employees acquire their Secondary School Graduation Diploma.

Mobil competes in a highly competitive world market driven by innovative technology and demanding employees who can adapt quickly to a rapidly changing workplace environment. In an effort to stay competitive, Mobil reduced manufacturing costs by changing product lines and operating systems, upgrading technology and introducing multiskilling.

Innovativeness

Mobil approached the Hastings Prince Edward County Roman Catholic Separate School Board to develop an Enhanced Communications Program suited to adult learners. Mobil pays employees their wages while they attend classes, even if they are not scheduled to work on shift when they are in class. Mobil even pays its employees while they attend classes to earn their Secondary School Graduation Diploma. Results of classroom testing are between employees and the school board and are not revealed to Mobil, which shows employees that passing courses is not linked with keeping their jobs.

Benefits

Benefits to employer

- Increased productivity by 20 per cent
- Enhanced employee flexibility
- Employees motivated to enhance their skills to progress in their careers within Mobil

Benefits to employees

- Fear of multiskilling alleviated
- Improved morale
- Enhanced communications skills

Contact

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MOLSON BREWERIES

Molson Breweries launched its Basic Education Skills Training (BEST) program in 1995 to enhance employees' literacy in the workplace. Increasing computerization combined with a workforce who experienced difficulties in workplace situations requiring the use of reading, writing or mathematical skills made it necessary for labour and management to agree on a strategy for improving workplace literacy. The outcome was BEST.

BEST classes are facilitated by Molson employees who have communications skills. Learners articulate their needs and goals, generate their own syllabi and monitor their own progress. The experience is informal, non-threatening and accommodates learners at all skill levels. Learners are encouraged to share their knowledge with their peers in a classroom setting.

Innovativeness

The innovativeness of Molson's BEST program lies principally in the way it combines the enhancement of workplace literacy and work performance with improving the quality of life (including self-confidence, self-expression and family life) of employees. BEST helps employees to achieve their present learning goals and instills in them a drive to continue learning. BEST enhances relations between labour and management through education.

Benefits

Benefits to employer

- Improved worker efficiency
- United workforce
- Workers embrace computers

Benefits to employees

- Increased competency as employees and fulfilled as people
- Enhanced flexibility and reduced fear of technology
- Improved communications skills

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PRODUITS FORESTIERS ALLIANCE INC.

Depuis déjà quelques années, les employés et la direction de Produits forestiers ALLIANCE de Saint-Félicien discutaient de la possibilité d'enclencher une démarche de formation de base en milieu de travail. En juin 1996, ils ont lancé une campagne de sensibilisation suivie de quelques rencontres d'information pour les employés intéressés. L'objectif de départ était de permettre aux employés intéressés, sur une base volontaire, de pouvoir augmenter leurs compétences de base en français.

Caractère innovateur

Suite à la période estivale, des examens de classement ont eu lieu. Quarante-cinq candidats, incluant des conjointes, étaient alors venus pour les tests de classement, ce qui représentait alors 25 % des employés de Produits forestiers ALLIANCE.

Les employés et leurs conjointes avaient la possibilité de participer à la formation à plusieurs reprises au courant de la journée (en après-midi et en soirée). Les employés et leurs conjointes ont noté qu'ils ont développé une certaine synergie de groupe entre eux.

La démarche des cours, les rencontres, les paroles d'encouragement sont tous des éléments importants. L'employeur a aussi organisé une rencontre pour ceux qui ont participé au programme afin d'évaluer les résultats. Cette rencontre a été appréciée par les employés et l'employeur et a reçu des informations importantes.

Avantages

Avantages pour l'employeur

- augmente l'appartenance des employés à l'entreprise
- employeur et employés sont également heureux des résultats

Avantages pour les employés

- se sentent davantage appréciés
- augmente la confiance et l'estime de soi

Personnes-Ressources

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LARGE BUSINESS
LITERACY INITIATIVES

INITIATIVES
D'ALPHABÉTISATION
AU SEIN D'UNE
GRANDE ENTREPRISE

WINNER

NATIONAL SEA PRODUCTS

National Sea Products, one of Canada's largest marketers of prepared, frozen, fresh and packaged seafood launched its Workplace Skills Training Program in 1994 to impart workplace literacy skills to its workers on the assumption that enhanced education and skills make people more adaptable, whether within or outside the fishing industry. National Sea Products developed its Workplace Skills Training Program in response to the challenges of global competition, the fisheries crisis, free trade and new technology. The company and its union agreed that to sustain its communities, business and its workers needed basic adult education to help them to weather the storm.

National Sea Products encourages its own employees to volunteer to tutor their fellow employees and recruit volunteer tutors from the community at large. In both cases the company provides the training at its own expense.

Innovativeness

National Sea Products' innovativeness lies in its commitment to improving the workplace literacy skills and education of employed and laidoff workers alike in an effort to shore up the human resources infrastructure of the fishing communities it serves. Corporate social responsibility requires a company to take care of its people and its communities as an integral part of sustainable development within an industry.

Benefits

Benefits to employer

- Movement towards clear language in corporate communications
- By developing its own tutors, the company does not need to import expensive trainers

Benefits to employees

- Retrain for other jobs
- Can now help their children with their homework from school

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ABITIBI CONSOLIDATED

In the early 1990s, Abitibi Consolidated began conceptualizing the development of an "in-house college" to provide learning opportunities for employees seeking to earn their Grade 12 equivalency diploma and/or pursue post-secondary studies. Abitibi realized it would need to upgrade its employees' workplace literacy, employability and technical skills if it were to become the world's premier manufacturer and marketer of communications-related papers.

Northern College staffed the company's Training Centre with a qualified instructor two afternoons a week to provide Ontario Basic Skills training, tutoring to assist employees pursuing correspondence studies to earn their 1st through 4th class Stationary Engineer certificates and instruction in Business Administration and Pulp and Paper Technology (college programs). Twenty-three Abitibi employees are now graduating from their 2-year Business Administration programs and 19 of the company's employees have already graduated from the their 3-year Pulp and Paper Technology courses.

Innovativeness

Abitibi's innovativeness lies chiefly in its delivery of college programs in the workplace while building up computer literacy skills and competence in English and French as a second language.

Benefits

Benefits to employer

- Reduced costs and increased efficiency
- Reduced training time due to better learning retention
- Enhanced employee problem-solving abilities

Benefits to employees

- Enhanced skills
- Increased recognition in the form of academic certificates and diplomas

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ALCAN ALUMINUM LIMITED

Alcan Aluminum Limited launched its Personal Education Program (PEP) following extensive consultations with its labour partner, the Canadian Auto Workers, to enhance its employees' reading, writing, numeracy and computer skills to enable them to adapt to reorganization and plant modernization and to become better people and citizens. Alcan devoted considerable attention to removing barriers that adult learners typically face.

Alcan assessed its employee-learner volunteers' workplace literacy skills and placed them in learning groups appropriate to their abilities. The company also ensured that all stakeholders shared the enthusiasm of the volunteering adult learners. Alcan ran the pilot program entirely on company time but found that participants devoted a considerable amount of their own time to making the company's learning initiative a success.

Innovativeness

Alcan's innovativeness lies chiefly in its commitment to ensuring strong acceptance on the part of all stakeholders, including supervisors and union representatives (in other words, not just PEP instructors and/or participating employee-learners). This is critical to ensuring the development of a true culture of learning.

Benefits

Operational benefits

- Increased efficiency
- Improved safety and communications

Benefits to employees

- Learn how to learn
- Enhanced workplace literacy and employability skills

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APOTEX INC.

Apotex Inc., Canada's largest Canadian-owned pharmaceutical company, inaugurated its Language of Business (LOB) program in 1995 to develop its employees' fundamental language skills, to enable them to work safely and effectively and be accountable for their decisions. LOB bridges the gap between the current language skills of its employees and the actual and projected language skill requirements of manufacturing positions within the company. Apotex realized that it had to address this language skills gap if its plans for expansion and incorporating new technology were ever to come to fruition.

Almost 120 manufacturing employees have graduated from LOB to date, 9 of whom have moved on to more senior positions at Apotex that would not have been open to them previously. Four graduates of LOB have gone on to co-op positions that require specific language skills.

Innovativeness

Apotex's innovativeness lies chiefly in its preserving the confidentiality of employees' achievements in LOB while allowing managers to have input into developing learning activities. Other innovations include the practice of employees' evaluating themselves and being expected to demonstrate their improved abilities on the job.

Benefits

Benefits to employer

- Enhanced productivity, employee adaptability
- Reduced downtime, accidents
- Enhanced effectiveness of training programs

Benefits to employees

- Enhanced self-confidence, reading, writing, listening and speaking skills
- Broadened choice within the company

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AVENOR INC.

Avenor Dryden Mill launched its workplace literacy training program to develop its employees' skills to ensure a safe and productive workforce. An important consideration in the company's thinking was to ensure that employees across the mill's operations were exposed to a recognizable, consistent plan of employee development. Avenor's training program involves developing proficiency profiles and related task objectives and empowering area trainers to develop employees' skills to training targets.

In 1997, almost 30 employees enrolled in college or university courses to fulfil their training requirements. In the same year, 1,600 employees attended the company's software training courses on their own time and these courses have now been opened to members of employees' families.

Innovativeness

Avenor's innovativeness lies in its efforts to standardize its training operations across the entire company. A uniform training plan may have the potential for making employees more adaptable in the mill.

Benefits

Benefits to employer

- Develops a workforce trained to a recognizable, consistent standard
- Develops a safe and efficient workforce

Benefits to employees

- Enhanced their workplace literacy skills
- Improved safety on the job

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BANK OF MONTREAL

In 1993, the Bank of Montreal developed a workplace literacy program for employees for whom English is a second language to ensure that they were able to take full advantage of the learning programmes the company offered and to address changes in the way it conducts its business.

The Bank of Montreal's workplace literacy initiative involved partnering with the Toronto Board of Education to deliver an English as a Second Language (ESL) program tailored to the needs of the company's employees. It also involved building a Learning for Success and Vocal Power programs on that foundation. The purpose of these programs is to help employees shift their focus from the paper banking transaction to the personal aspect of the relationship between teller and customer and the importance of having good communications skills.

Innovativeness

The Bank of Montreal's innovativeness lies in its linkage of the ESL needs of its employees with workplace literacy and communications requirements and issues of cultural difference in the bank's business environment. The company needed to address the needs of employee from 18 different ethnic backgrounds who speak 20 different languages.

Benefits

Benefits to employer

- Enhanced capacity for providing personal banking services to its customers
- Enhanced efficacy of future training programs to improve customer service

Benefits to employees

- Enhanced self-confidence
- Enhanced workplace literacy and employability skills

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BRISTOL AEROSPACE LIMITED

Bristol Aerospace Limited launched its Basic Education in the Workplace Program in 1995 to enhance its employees' reading, writing, listening, speaking and mathematical skills and develop a culture of learning within its workforce. Since its inception, 125 employees have completed basic skills training in one or more courses designed to develop employability and science literacy skills.

Bristol Aerospace made a strategic decision to move into the commercial aviation business, which in turn required the company to move towards multiskilling: the amalgamation of job classifications from 118 to 24 required employees to have a broader knowledge and skill base than they had.

Innovativeness

Bristol Aerospace's innovativeness lies in its sensitivity to the issue of separating basic skills or workplace literacy training from technical skills training leading to certification in a trade, which builds on basic skills training. Another innovative aspect of Bristol Aerospace's program is its linkage of course content with workplace matters and employment issues.

Benefits

Benefits to employer

- Enhanced workplace literacy skills give employees the confidence to participate in technical training leading to certification in their trades, which is necessary for the company to achieve ISO 9000 certification
- Qualified/certified employees attract commercial contracts to the company

Benefits to employees

- Enhanced self-confidence
- Making enhanced technical training more of possibility and thereby opening up better opportunities for technical training

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CRESTBROOK FOREST INDUSTRIES

Crestbrook Forest Industries launched its workplace literacy program in 1996 to develop its employees' literacy, numeracy and computer literacy skills to better equip them for emerging industry employment requirements. Crestbrook focuses on enhancing its employees' employability skills and knowledge (a broader category than simple workplace literacy) in order to improve work processes, enhance safety and increase productivity. It also aims to build up its employees' self-confidence and thereby to increase their responsiveness to workplace and industry change.

Since its inception 6 employee-learners have completed their Grade 12 equivalency requirements and 1 francophone student has completed these requirements in English.

Innovativeness

Crestbrook's innovativeness lies chiefly in its use of workplace literacy development as a way of breaking down barriers between management and labour. Workplace literate employees are included in making decisions about corporate training and enhanced communication between labour and management has decreased the incidence of employee grievances.

Benefits

Benefits to employer

- Enhanced performance and higher profits
- Reduced resistance to technological change

Benefits to employees

- Heightened self-confidence
- Develop transferable employability skills

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KRAFT CANADA INC.

Le programme de formation clé existe depuis 1990 et offre plusieurs genres de formation aux employés de Kraft Canada Inc. Au fil des ans, la compagnie a constaté que certains employés avaient de la difficulté à réussir la formation technique. Par conséquent, Kraft a mis sur pied en 1994 le projet Clé qui était consacré au développement des compétences de base en lecture, écriture et calcul. Après deux années d'activités, ils ont modifié le projet pour mieux répondre aux besoins spécifiques des gens en identifiant et en offrant la formation selon leurs besoins et en s'assurant d'une meilleure contribution de leur part.

Caractère innovateur

Les objectifs principaux de ce programme sont de mieux outiller les employés afin qu'ils réussissent la formation technique, qu'ils soient plus à l'aise dans leur poste de travail, et finalement, qu'ils satisfassent aux nouvelles exigences qui entreront en vigueur en septembre 1998. À compter de cette date, l'employé doit démontrer qu'il possède les compétences de base en lecture, écriture et calcul.

Avec le succès de ce programme, Kraft peut mieux répondre aux besoins de tous et peut appuyer, de façon plus efficace, le développement des compétences de base essentielles aux opérations.

Avantages

Avantages pour l'employeur

- rend les gens plus flexibles et aptes à suivre la formation technique
- augmente la participation et la contribution au travail d'équipe

Avantages pour les employés

- deviennent plus à l'aise à leur poste de travail
- augmente la confiance et l'estime de soi
- renforce le sentiment que l'organisation croit en eux et qu'ils ont leur place au sein de la compagnie

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Coordonnatrice en formation

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MICHELIN

NORTH AMERICA (CANADA) INC.

Michelin North America (Canada) Inc., a tire manufacturing company opened its learning centres in 1993 to help its employees develop their literacy, numeracy and computer literacy skills and their knowledge base to meet the challenges associated with a changing work environment. Michelin recognizes that employees who lack workplace literacy skills are unlikely to support Michelin's future in the tire manufacturing business.

Michelin's learning centres help the company's employees achieve Nova Scotia Community College levels 1-4 certification, Grade 12 equivalency and various levels of computer literacy.

Innovativeness

Michelin's innovativeness lies in its multifaceted approach to teaching and learning and particularly its inclusion of peer tutoring and its emphasis on peer encouragement, as opposed to hierarchical dictate to recruit employee-learners.

Benefits

Benefits to employer

- Employees who enhance their skills act as goodwill ambassadors for the company's learning centres
- Employees attempt new tasks without hesitation and participate in workrelated communications projects

Benefits to employees

- Enhance their literacy, numeracy and computer literacy skills
- Enhanced workplace literacy skills means better opportunities for internal advancement

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PALLISER FURNITURE

Palliser Furniture launched its basic skills program in 1994 to enhance its employees' literacy and numeracy skills to better equip them to do their jobs. Palliser's reasoning is simple: a literate and numerate workforce is a better workforce that gets even better over time. Investing in workplace literacy produces a greater return on the company's investments in other education and training programs.

It is a testament to Palliser that more than 50 per cent of the employees in one division of their company voluntarily participate in numeracy enhancement training. Palliser is committed to removing workplace-literacy-related obstacles to advancement within the company, even into managerial roles.

Innovativeness

Palliser's innovativeness lies chiefly in its having put a few of its more advanced employee-learners to work to develop a plain language job evaluation/performance review, which involved employees directly in thinking through performance criteria used in assessing employees for whom they were responsible, thus putting their literacy training to work in a nonsimulated activity.

Benefits

Benefits to employer

- Enhanced communications throughout the company
- Reduced error rates
- Reduced turnover rate from 14 per cent to 3 per cent

Benefits to employees

- Enhanced literacy and numeracy skills
- Barriers for advancement in the company removed

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PITNEY BOWES OF CANADA LTD.

In 1995, Pitney Bowes of Canada Ltd.'s Educational Assistance and Reimbursement policy was changed to an Educational Assistance Literacy program, transforming one of the company's employee benefits programs into an educational program designed to encourage its employees to take a share of the responsibility for employment-related personal development and lifelong learning. Through the program Pitney Bowes also seeks to be able to offer every customer service in both French and English and to ensure computer literacy and numeracy throughout the company.

Over the past 3 years, Pitney Bowes has invested \$55,000 in tuition, books and related fees and employees have committed about 1,900 days of their own personal time taking courses to satisfy the company's language, computer literacy and numeracy requirements.

Innovativeness

Pitney Bowes' innovativeness lies in its reconceptualization of learning within the organization: workplace-related learning is no longer seen as a fringe benefit but as an employee responsibility. By shifting its thinking in this direction, the company expects to maintain and attract a more flexible workforce better able to meet the needs of its customers.

Benefits

Benefits to employer

- Gains a more flexible workforce
- Ensures that its employees are committed to workplace-related training that benefits themselves and the company

Benefits to employees

- Enhanced workplace literacy and employability skills
- Higher satisfaction with employment

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SYNCRUDE CANADA LTD.

Syncrude Canada Ltd., the world's largest producer of crude oil from the oilsands, launched its Effective Reading in Context (ERIC) program in 1988 to develop its employees' workplace literacy and employability skills to help them meet the challenges posed by technological change, new organizational structures and the trend towards multi-skilling. ERIC was initially offered to supervisors but is now offered to all Syncrude employees and the program has been exported to and adapted for other companies.

Since its inception, more than 1,100 people have participated in ERIC, gaining workplace literacy and employability skills. The success of ERIC is due in large part to the manner in which everyday workplace materials are incorporated into program learning activities.

Innovativeness

Syncrude's innovativeness lies in its recognition that only employees who are equipped with sound workplace literacy and employability skills can participate effectively in the managerial component involved in working in semiautonomous work teams. The company understands that only by engendering a corporate culture of learning can it meet its organizational objectives.

Benefits

Benefits to employer

- Enhanced employee adaptability and safety
- Enhanced employee decision-making abilities

Benefits to employees

- Gain workplace literacy
- Enhanced employability within the company

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