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5 Best Practices in Digital Training & Engagement for Firstline Workforces

According to the Service Council, 70% of service organizations indicated that they would be burdened by the knowledge loss of a retiring workforce in the next five to ten years and an additional **2 million workers** will be required by the year 2021 to meet market demand for service and support.

This creates an issue for organizations with large field forces, as training firstline workers isn't easy. While organizations likely have training programs for the base skills and processes of a role, traditional training methods don't typically apply when training on digital tools used in the field. Training leaders often aren't sure how to provide the necessary digital training and ongoing support these firstline workers need.

Beyond the training challenges around the influx of new workers, problems also occur when new technology is introduced. When a company rolls out a new digital solution but fails to adequately train its firstline workers (and support them long-term), this tool won't be adopted or used correctly. As a result, the time and money spent creating the solution is wasted.

The bottom line is this: organizations with large field forces are in need of a new training solution—a digital training & engagement tool. Digital Adoption Platform (DAP) technology is the solution, but needs to be optimized to work specifically for these workers. This guide will lay out five key best practices any digital training solution for firstline workers should have.

Use digital to train on digital

It's important to train users in the environment they will be working. For digital tools used on the job, this training should happen right within the application. Additionally, users increasingly want things that are more self-guided and that includes training. That's why hands-on simulation is much more effective than just visually showing someone how to use a tool, allowing the worker to get into the application right away.

For this type of guided simulation, it is best practice to break parts of the app down into discrete bite-sized lessons, giving context to the app functionality by relating back to the specific job duties and business processes the worker will be doing. Each lesson should be organized into three parts:

1. Overview or "walkthrough" of what the user will learn
2. Guided practice within the app
3. Assessment to demonstrate competence

Depending on the worker, each will have a different set of lessons unique to their role. Companies can also use video here to demonstrate how to use specific features or show how to use the app in context.

Why video? Just ask YouTube. **More than half (51%) of YouTube users** use the site to learn how to do new things, from how to change their oil to how to fix something in their home. Plus, more than **70% of YouTube watch time** comes from mobile devices.

Don't forget about the devices

Many workers, whether new or simply unfamiliar with the technology, need training on the actual devices (and peripherals) they will be using in the field, which may include how to:

- Turn it on and off
- Connect Bluetooth
- Swap batteries
- Troubleshoot technical issues
- Use onboard features of the device, like a barcode scanner, or connect to external devices, such as printers

The devices used for these applications aren't always consumer-grade phones or tablets but are often more rugged devices meant to withstand the tougher environments where firstline workers are.

Measure progress with analytics

It's important to have visibility into digital training programs, for a number of reasons and stakeholders.

✓ **Users** benefit from having a dashboard to track progress toward their own assigned lessons.

✓ **Managers and/or leaders** need higher level access to see their whole team's progress, to identify if anyone needs extra help (and to make sure the team is on track if a new application is being launched).

✓ **Training or program leaders** need the highest level of visibility to see all field workers' progress, identify regions or teams that are having issues or need extra help, and for accountability purposes. This is essential to monitor workers' progress, identify who needs extra help and deploy those resources early, and identify areas of the training that aren't successful.

For example

Is everyone failing one particular lesson or missing one piece of functionality? Either the training needs to be fixed, or possibly navigation or a specific feature within the app itself needs to be redesigned.

Ongoing engagement

Training can't be a "one and done" event. Doing so isn't practical or effective. According to the Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve, without reinforcement, people forget 40% of their training after a few days and 90% after a month, on average. Up-front training leads to competency, but ongoing engagement, guidance, and reinforcement lead to mastery. Consider the following hypothetical scenarios.

Scenario

A worker walks into the job site and forgets how to do a particular task or process. Their lessons are always available on their device, so they can reference at any time on-demand. This accessibility is also beneficial for a task the worker rarely does and needs a refresher on.

As a result, support and managers experience fewer calls requesting assistance using technology and applications. Plus, the worker gets their answer much fast, as it takes an average of **24.2 hours to provide the first response** to an internal support ticket.

The company identifies a problem with how workers are performing a particular task in the field. The company can push a training campaign out to the entire workforce (such as a training video or new lesson) or to specific users based on role, region, and more, so workers can learn without downtime.

There are further reasons ongoing engagement is so crucial. In some industries, annual field worker turnover rates can be anywhere from 25%-100%, making regular training for new workers necessary. Furthermore, when working with digital/mobile apps, there will likely be updates and new features added regularly, which necessitates additional training.

Help existing training teams

Digital tools are excellent to fill gaps where traditional training methods often fall short and greatly help existing training teams. It frees up their time and resources to provide more high-touch, high-value training for the users who need it.

There will always be some workers that require higher-touch support. This could be delivered through a virtual training session with an actual trainer, or even an on-site 1x1 training session for anyone who is really struggling.

Since the bulk of the training has been digitized, trainers are now available to provide this high-touch, tailored support for the workers who need it the most. Offering this is important to augment the digital training offerings, so there is still an option to talk to a human.

Conclusion

We know that traditional training methods don't cut it for large mobile workforces, yet having a well-equipped field force is critical for success. Digital training and engagement is the future for firstline workforces—and the future is here now with Skyllful. Our DAP offering specifically for firstline workers captures these best practices and provides the optimum training experience for field operations teams. **Learn more now.**