

Top 6 Creative Employee Training Methods & Techniques

\$290,000, \$3.7 million, \$13 million. These are the average employee training budgets, depending on company size, reported [Training Magazine](#) in late 2016. But how much of these budgets is dedicated to developing the kind of employee training methods and techniques that get team members thinking outside the box?

Not much, according to the employees themselves. According to [BKV](#), a direct marketing agency, almost 80% of people believe that expressing their creativity makes a difference in their lives, but about the same percent of people feel their workplaces prioritize productivity over creativity.

Let's step outside the tech world for a moment to see how this strategy could be costing your company real money.

When Zingerman's Roadhouse restaurant in Ann Arbor, Michigan, realized food costs were increasing, it turned to its employees to figure out what to do.

The restaurant had trained employees of all levels "to think and act like owners," [reported Fortune](#). It encouraged creativity on a daily basis, so when this challenge came up, the solution didn't come from the CEO, but from the dishwasher, who noticed the restaurant was throwing away lots of fries every day.

This discovery led the restaurant to "decrease the initial portion of fries and offer free refills. This saved money without compromising great service," reported Fortune.

Want similar results?

To encourage employees to give your company everything they've got, you need to encourage creativity from day one, starting with your employee training methods.

Here's how.

1. Make sure your employee training techniques are fun

You know we believe that [a great employee onboarding process](#) gets employees feeling confident and drives productivity. But it's also important to make sure they have fun from day one of training to help them connect emotionally to your company goals, and make sure they know you encourage them to come up with original ideas.

Take The Motley Fool, a multimedia company that aims to help the world invest better, for example. It won multiple "Best Places to Work" awards – in no doubt, at least partially because of its employee training methods. The company has prepared a mobile responsive employee handbook-like called [The Fool Rules](#), that's filled with short texts, images and a video.

Among others, it includes a welcome video from the CEO, telling you how great you are and that he wants to make sure you get to do what you love, a quick list of core company values that includes "revel in your work," the Code of Foolish Conduct, an explanation of what the company does, and a tease about the company's very own holiday – April Fool's Day, when the company teaches investment by pulling pranks on employees and customers.

The Fool Rules website goes on to describe employee benefits, key terms (like "the grassy area near Potbelly's") and work policies. One of the policies is an annual draw that obligates one random employee to take a 2 week vacation with no connection to the office and hardly any time to prepare the rest of the team, saying it's "a wonderful practice for teams in the event that only one person knows how to do a specific job."

2. Let employees study the way they study best

Some people learn better in the morning, others at night. Some learn better when they consume small chunks of information each time, while others like to dive in deep and learn everything they can at once. Some prefer to read, others to watch, and yet others learn best when they listen to content as they take the train or go out for a run.

When you provide online training programs, each employee can study the way she studies best, at her own pace. It's one of the best employee training methods out there, because [results are easily measureable, so it's easy to follow up with contextual training content](#) that will help employees strengthen skills that still require strengthening.

3. Develop bootcamps and hackathons

When new engineers join Facebook, they're thrown into a six week bootcamp, where they're requested to collaborate on a project that goes live on Facebook's site pretty quickly. At the same time, senior management is available to offer coaching and mentoring, [wrote Andrew Bosworth, VP of engineering at Facebook](#), a year after this program started.

But as we said in the past, one of the most creative employee training techniques is to [create hackathons](#) that last several hours or a full day, where employees work on a project together, get extra freedom to go crazy with their ideas, and learn from each other as they go.

4. Share customer success stories

Customers often document customer success stories to market their products to potential customers, but companies can also use these case studies as an employee training technique.

That's because case studies usually contain interviews with real customers, who share their experience with the company, including doubts, fears, challenges and triumphs.

Understanding customer perspectives can make a big difference for most departments in your company, who often don't get to interact with customers themselves.

5. Encourage employees to switch jobs (at least for a while)

Customer point of views aren't the only ones employees need to get to know. They need to understand the needs of other team members and other departments as well, because it will make it easier for them to collaborate and get your company better results.

For example, [a 2016 study](#) discovered that companies that exceed revenue goals are twice as likely to have marketing team members join salespeople on sales meetings, even though it's not common practice.

One employee training technique you implement is have your employees shadow relevant colleagues across your organization, and maybe even take their job for a day.

If you're training people in management, have them work in low-level positions for a day or a week, to get a better understanding of what it's like for the people who will be executing their strategies.

If you're training people in lower level positions, have them shadow or take over leadership positions to gain a deeper understanding of how their job serves the bigger picture. If they enjoy it, it might give them a greater motivation to excel and advance along the way.

6. Blend employee training methods

Blending employee training methods is [beneficial to both employees and companies](#).

First, you get to enjoy the benefits of each method. You get the extra efficiency of employees who study at their own pace, but also the creative ideas that can only be sparked when people collaborate.

Then, blending methods lets you develop learning personas as you give employees multiple types of experiences, and track which methods lead to better performance in which situations.

Remember – always get feedback from the employees themselves, and be willing to keep improving as you go.