

By Soumitra Mukherjee and Lei Tang

Training For Dollars

When is the last time you read the user's manual?

You just purchased a new smartphone. What do you do next? Turn it on and start using it, of course. In fact, you are so fascinated with all the things your new smartphone can do that you try them all out as fast as you can. Bought a new app for that smartphone? Download and start using it. New contact system? Enter the number and make a call. New camera on the phone? Take a picture and send it off. GPS? Turn it on and follow the directions. A recent study, however, indicated that people are using only 10 percent of their smartphone's capabilities. Ten percent! Why is it that we can easily use the basic functions, but never utilize its full potential?

One of the answers to this question comes from the fact that technology changes every few months. Upgrades to our electronic products come and go and come again, so in our time-pressed lives, it's difficult to find the time to learn how to use the products fully. The speed with which these changes occur forces us to "figure it out" on the go. Actually, when is the last time you read a user's manual from cover to cover?

Whether it's a smartphone, automobile, television, computer hardware or software, the odds are that you have opted to figure out how the technology works as you are using it. This gets the job done, but are you making use of all of your new product's bells and whistles? And are you using that product efficiently? In today's competitive marketplace, there is no room for mistakes. If we learn how to use the product to its full potential right at the beginning, we could save a large amount of time in the long term and perhaps put some money onto our company's bottom line by being more productive.

Most of us indicate that customer service sets us apart from the competition. Whether you are a supplier or a distributor, customer service is critical to your daily operations. What better way to make sure your customers know the most efficient and productive way to use the product you sold to them than training them on that product right on the front end of the sale. This would have a positive impact on your bottom line and your reputation as a provider of superior service.

TRAINING METHODOLOGY

Whether you are training on the best torch to use in an application, the use of computer software, robotic welding or changing welding rods, the following training tips are universal...

- Training must be provided by an extremely competent and talented teacher. A good trainer should have the experience level, industry knowledge and talent in explaining information. Some patience helps too.
- Training should be done in an environment where the student is not disturbed or distracted. For optimal results, the student must stay focused during the training session,

and the trainer should possess the skills to keep the student focused.

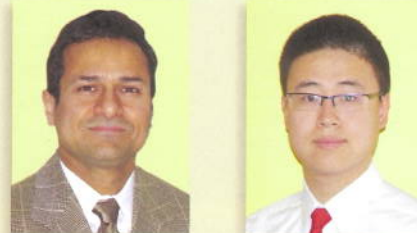
- A very simple, yet comprehensive, written training procedure should be developed and documented. The student must be disciplined enough to use and follow the written procedure until it becomes a habit. Repeating the action over and over under the trainer's watchful eye is very important to the learning process.
- The written documentation and step-by-step process should be given to the trainee. This enables them to make sure they are following the correct process again and again.
- Refresher courses taken periodically ensure that the original procedure is being followed or to introduce new or improved features or techniques that may have been developed since the original training session. These courses could be done online.
- Training more than one person in a specific function is important. You don't want someone to walk out the door with all the knowledge. Plus, there's a backup if someone is out sick. Also, trainees communicate with each other and can help colleagues when a question arises.

DOING THINGS THE RIGHT WAY DOESN'T MEAN

DOING THEM THE OLD WAY

The welding business is an old industry. Our fathers and grandfathers developed processes and techniques in the 1940s and 1950s. They taught their children how they did things, and their children are teaching a new generation... how they did things. In our fast-paced businesses, it's easy to get in the habit of doing something one way because it works, without thinking about how it can work better.

Helping your customers and helping yourself utilize the tools in front of you more efficiently and more productively makes you a better supplier to them. It not only shows you have your customer's best interests in mind, but makes you better at what you do. ✨



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