Issue 273　　　　　**To our clients and friends**　　　　**April 13, 2010**

Training Holds the Key to Empowerment

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Train and sustain your gains

Dave, a young supervisor for an electrical contractor, told our Leadership Development LAB (LDL) a fabulous story. It seems Irving, one of his new apprentice craftsmen, was having some difficulty getting a piece of conduit into the ceiling space, so Dave climbed up in the rafters of the building he was working in to help out.

After Dave crawled up into the space, he realized that the conduit couldn't go in the available space with the 90-degree bend that it had on it. While Dave crouched on his knees, he sent Irving back to get a piece of conduit with the correct bend, about 30 degrees - a bend that would go through the space available.

Dave was down on his knees waiting on the steel I-beam for what seemed like hours. It wasn't really that long, but it was long enough that it felt like the I-beam was starting to come up through his knees to his thighs. The longer Dave waited, the more intense the pain became and the more impatient he became.

Finally, Dave spotted Irving coming back with a piece of conduit which has the same 90- degree angle on it as the former piece. Of course, it was not going to fit through the available space.

"I was biting my tongue, "Dave recalled. "I wanted to say, 'How stupid can you be?'"

He crawled back down off the I-beam to see what was going on - why this guy would come back with the same bend twice. He found out that Irving had never been trained on how to make the needed 30-degree angle bend. Training is empowering.

What a vivid example of the high cost of incomplete, inadequate training! We all know why we don't conduct training:

- "We don't have the time."
- "It costs money."
- "We have too much turnover."

We might not find any extra time while projects are in progress. We do, however, mysteriously find "extra" time when we have to do rework.

We do pay the cost of rework when we remove or replace the defective work that our customers send back and reject.

Among the chief causes of turnover is inadequate training. People who experience failure feel inadequate and find little or no job satisfaction, naturally leading to turnover.

It has been conservatively estimated that our Japanese and German competitors spend two to three times the amount of money on training that we do.

Before Nissan opened its truck plant in Smyrna, Tennessee, the company spent the equivalent of $15,000 per employee on training. When Motorola made the decision to become a "world-class" competitor, it began down a path which led to the training of more than 2,000 employees in statistical process control. As a result, Motorola earned the Malcolm Baldrige Award, the highest industrial award given in America.

When I heard Motorola's executive vice president, Bill Smith, speak to more than 300 of the top aerospace and electronic managers at Boeing in January 1990, he was asked the question, "What did the training cost you?" He said, "I have no idea, no way of measuring what the training cost, but I think it cost us a negative $40 million."

He went on to say that the actual out-of-pocket costs were about $4.5 million, but he was certain the company had saved at least $50 million.

My challenge to you is to honestly take a look at your attitudes and practices around training. Exercise the courage to ask your team:

- "What is one area you would like more training in?"
- "What is one area you think others in the company need more training in?"
- "What training would you be willing to conduct?"
- Would you be willing to come in before or after work for training?"

You may be surprised at the results. Knowledge is powerful. All powerful teams are made up of empowered, knowledgeable people - people who are not only fully trained for their own job, but are cross trained so they can play more than one position.

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