

How To Maximize Your Staff Training Budget

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The relationship between effective training and employee performance is well-researched; a well-trained staff is more engaged in their job, delivers better customer service, represents your brand more professionally, and is more resistant to turnover – all good things. But finding the time and the budget to effectively train staff can be a challenge. Simply put, a training budget includes direct and indirect costs of the courses and materials needed maintain employee training or retraining. On average companies with 100-999 employees [train their staff](#) 61.2 hours per year. Training your staff gives your gym a competitive edge, so maximizing your ability to effectively train your staff is a crucial part of your business.

Create a Training Budget

Before you can begin to maximize your training budget, you'll need to make sure you have a line item for training on your annual budget. If you only train out of necessity or when there's surplus cash in the bank, you're missing a serious competitive advantage. Expect to cover costs associated with training: delivery, materials, labor, travel, and ongoing trainings. Your training budget will depend on the size of your staff, and smaller businesses spend more on staff training than larger business, but the average training budget is more than [\\$1200 per employee](#) or [1-3%](#) of your annual salary budget.

Include Training in Your Strategic Plan

Training is a necessity, as your gym staff is responsible for performing the majority of the work in the gym, so how they are trained should be aligned with branding and the overall mission of the gym. When you view [training strategically](#), training plans are developed according to the needs of the business and are more efficient. A strategic training plan for staff is based on the strategic objectives of the gym and on the tasks at which your staff needs to be proficient. In

short, you must ensure any trainings offered to staff are aligned with the goals of the gym and that they cover situations that your staff needs to be prepared for.

Develop Training Plans

Develop training plans for each job description in your gym and gather the training materials and resources for how you want the staff trained. Using your budget, determine where your training budget will be spent. Know which staff positions can be cross-trained and outline the timeline for each position. Discuss training in interviews and with new hires, and clearly outline your expectations. Create a dialogue with your staff to ensure that they are learning and retaining the training information. Employee commitment is a big part of maximizing your budget, so getting staff on board creates a positive cycle where trained staff are happier in their roles and there is less turnover in your gym.

Train Regularly and Frequently

Training in your gym can be formal or informal, however short, regular trainings keep staff educated, involved, and motivated while not hitting your labor costs the way large trainings do. Post the topics ahead of the training, ask staff to submit their questions for discussion so you're prepared for the training, then follow up with an email synopsis of the training. E-trainings or one-on-one trainings can be built into schedules when group trainings can't be held.

Cross-training and Mentoring

Cross training gives your staff new responsibilities and skills, while mentoring lets them teach and support each other through the process. Allow staff to work together and have them change duties regularly so they are continuously learning. For staff that excel at cross-training and mentoring, you can offer them a track as a trainer, adding training to their job description and adding a pay rate increase.

Vendor Presentations

Many vendors will happily come in to speak to staff about their products and services without charging a fee for the presentation. Before the training you can discuss with the vendor or sales rep how to make the training very specific to your gym and staff. For instance, to a climbing shoe rep you can say: "We want our staff to know about the performance of your climbing shoes, learn how to fit them properly, and review strategies to close a sale." To a gear sales rep you can use the same approach, "We want you to discuss applicable uses for your climbing gear, instruct them on proper usage, and review safety protocols." Gyms buy a high volume of holds, shoes, ropes, and gear – utilize your company reps to your advantage.

Reuse Training Materials

While there are some training materials you'll want your staff to keep, create a library of training materials that can be reused. Books, publications, and DVD's don't take up much space but can

become a handy resource for staff and can be used repeatedly.

Online Training

Online training typically has lower costs due to staff not having to travel and not needing additional materials. As staff can access the course remotely and at any time, online training can be built into schedules to evenly distribute extra labor.

Tie Training to Retention

When you have staff who are interested in training or certifications for skills such as [routesetting](#), [management & operations](#), or [competition coaching](#), ask them to commit to working for you for a specified amount of time if you support those endeavors financially. Another option is to reimburse them over time for getting training or certifications on their own. While these training expenses might hit the bottom line in a bigger way than you want, by investing in your employees you increase employee retention and therefore avoid training expenses associated with high turnover.

Putting It All Together (PIAT)

Implementing a training program can be done in small manageable steps and will greatly benefit your gym by engaging staff and ensuring member satisfaction.

- Include training in your strategic plan and budget.
- Develop job-specific training materials.
- Set expectations during interviews and include training as part of the work week.
- Cross-train and develop mentorship.
- Reuse training materials & use online learning tools to reduce costs.
- Utilize company reps to your training advantage.
- Tie training to retention.

About The Author



Amanda Ashley is a writer, climber, and a climbing mom. From her early days spent training on the musty community woody in The School at the New River Gorge to training in modern mega climbing gyms all over the West, she's seen the rise of climbing gyms and the evolution of routesetting up close and personal for the past 20 years. Amanda writes about climbers, routesetting, changes in climbing movement and performance, and the climbing industry. Amanda's work has appeared in Climbing Magazine, Climbing Business Journal, and the Utah Adventure Journal.

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