

5 Steps to Tame Your Training Program



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Every spring my company has what we call a spring training rodeo. This is a day-long indoctrination/training exercise we developed to set up our employees for success. It doesn't matter if an employee is new or experienced; everyone participates in the day's events, myself included.

Yes, I know that it isn't easy for you to devote a day of training in the spring and lose all of that production. But we have discovered that it is worth our time to do it. We have put a lot of thought and time into this program. In addition to educating our employees on our company's history, culture, systems, procedures and equipment, we have some fun, too.

Here are the five steps to set up a training program and how we did it at my company.

1. Show and Tell.

The first thing we do is go through a PowerPoint presentation that shares my company's history with our employees. It shows them the old barn we used to work out of, our original fleet of three trucks, and they see a younger me all grubby and dirty working in the field. I include that image in case they think that I always had a big office with a nice comfy chair.

2. Set Expectations.

During the presentation, we cover things like our mission statement, show pictures of our jobs, before-and-after images of bed edging, spring cleanup, weekly maintenance and many others. We discuss safety and the role that every employee plays in our company.



3. Uniforms.

After the slide presentation, we have someone from Cintas, our uniform company, measure everybody for pants. We have our own shirts made and we pass them out along with hats and safety gear like eye protection, ear plugs and gloves. We talk about our image and make sure everyone knows that when they are issued uniforms there is no customization allowed. For example, cutting off the sleeves is not allowed.

4. Hands-on Training

We set up several training stations, including mower operation, two-cycle hand-held equipment operation, skidsteer loading and unloading and also truck and trailer operation and hook up. We break employees into groups of five to seven and the groups rotate to the stations where our foremen train them and allow them to operate the equipment. During the day, we also clean up our shop and tidy our grounds, including cutting out beds, trimming back perennials and freshening the mulch.

5. Cookout Time.

When lunch rolls around we make sure there is enough of everything so that everyone is taken care of by me and our office staff. I cook the burgers and my employees get a kick out of seeing me working over that hot grill. Everyone gets fed.

We try to make our training lively and have as much fun as we can while still offering solid instruction and hands-on experiences. I feel it's important that, as the owner, I'm intimately involved with our training rodeo, and I try to keep everyone's spirits up by complimenting them on their progress. I want to send a positive message to them that I'm committed to making our company and everyone that works for it as successful as possible.

If you want to see Steve Rak's training program in action, go to his YouTube channel called Rak Consulting and watch his [training rodeo video](#).