Managing Your Training Department

WAV GROUP

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March 2013
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A Quick Guide To Managing Your Training Department

Training, support, and customer service are key features to any organization in real estate. Although these are three separate functions in large organizations, they typically are handled by one or two departments in most real estate organizations. For the purpose of this article, we will discuss this as one department, Training.

WAV Group encourages the discipline of measuring satisfaction with the training department whenever a real estate organization performs focus groups, telephone interviews, or user surveys. Frequently the primary reason for dissatisfaction with a product or service is grounded in some part by poor training.

Real estate is an adult business. Proper training programs follow guidelines for adult learning. WAV Group has identified six methods for training in a real estate organization that comprise effective training programs. These are: 1 to 1; small group; webinar; recorded webinar; help desk support and Wikis. We will briefly discuss each of these.

One-On-One Training

Many adults do not like group training if they believe that they are significantly deficient in their understanding. As a result, they avoid group trainings, or when they do attend, they will not ask any questions because of the fear that classmates will think less of them. This is often true of top producing agents.

The best method for properly training this group of people in your organization is by offering one-on-one training. Many companies give this a name like White Glove or Concierge. There is a key ingredient to this type of training. You absolutely must charge for it. It does not need to be a lot, but something like $25 training reservation fee. The fee is paid when the training is scheduled. If the agent does not show up needs to reschedule, they loose the $25. If you do not charge the fee, agents will abuse the training. The training must be limited to one hour, which is the high limit of learning performance for adult learning.

Group Training

Adding training to office meetings or association meetings sometimes a good idea, sometimes not. You will find that agents may skip the meeting if they know that training is a component of the meeting. If this is true in your area, rather than incorporating training into the office meeting, just use that time to promote the separate training meetings.

Group training should be limited to one hour, and be sure to stay true to the lesson outlined in the training notice. Like one-on-one training, it is important to have agents sign up for the training. Most organizations do not charge for group training, but like one-on-one training, a small fee will bond the agent's commitment to showing up. You can justify the small fee if you are serving refreshments or if you need to rent a room.

Webinars

Webinars have become commonplace in professional training. It allows organizations to provide a persistent training schedule for beginner, intermediate, and advanced students routinely. More importantly, you can reach agents across the office or across the world just as easily.

The key to webinars is the registration process. Most webinar software has registration features built in. Once you have registered users, send out a reminder email with the webinar instructions one day before the webinar and again one hour before the webinar. Keep the webinar to 45 minutes and leave 15 minutes for Q & A.

Recorded Webinars

Most webinar software allows you to record the webinar. This allows agents who missed the webinar or were unable to attend the entire training with an opportunity to learn on their own time. Moreover, students can review the training and focus in on spots that they did not understand the first time through. Be sure to put the recorded training on your agent facing intranet or website, and organize it like a library. Encourage management and call center help desks to refer to the recorded webinars when answering questions. Include a reminder about the training library in your agent communications.

Help Desk Support

Help desk support is a pretty loosely defined training feature in real estate organizations. The cost of having 2 or more people at a desk full time requires a pretty large real estate organization due to costs. Typically organizations use a combination of email and call routing to trainers to provide help desk support. The key to successful help desk support is requiring the help desk trainers to document every call or support ticket. This documentation allows you to focus all of your training around the most commonly supported inquiries to reduce the number of help desk calls. Over a period of time, help desk personal will be able to develop a library of written instructions and short videos that they can send to agents as they contact the help desk. Instruct agents to read the instructions and/or watch the video first then call back if they still need support. Screen sharing software is absolutely required to shorten help desk support calls.

Wikis

Wikipedia is an enormous library of information. It is also easily searched allowing people to gain access to information very quickly. Today, there are many wiki products available for free that allow you to store training documents and short videos in a way that make finding them easy. Researchers have determined that many adults like videos that are between 3 and 5 minutes in length. Think of these as quick training guides. Ideally these short video vignettes or training documents give step-by-step instructions are integrated into software by placing a question mark next to the item that link to the wiki page.

Wikis allow the trainers to build a training library of material and refine it over time as needed to accommodate changes. If you support a lot of products, you can request that your vendor contribute to your wiki pages by duplicating their training material on your wiki. Another great feature of wikis is that they allow users to suggest changes or rate the quality of the wiki information in serving their needs. These crowd source tools allow the wiki to get better and better over time.

Curriculum

Training requires planning and management oversight. WAV Group training audits often lead to discovering significant gaps or missteps. To develop your curriculum, build a list of your products or services. Every product should have a basic, intermediate, and expert class. Ideally those classes would be provided every week online.

Survey your members on each product or service to measure user satisfaction. Ask users why they are dissatisfied and develop a training program that targets the trouble spots. Name the training appropriately so the agents recognize that the training is targeted on a specific item. Surveys should be done on a regular basis as needed to make adjustments to the curriculum.

Always leave space in the curriculum for new product releases or updates. Begin training on these releases weeks before they come out.

About WAV Group

WAV Group is a leader in providing research and consulting services to the real estate industry, and is comprised of corporate executives with a depth of expertise in both the real estate industry as well as the consumer market.

For more information or to register to receive report releases and newsletters please contact Victor Lund at 805-709-6696 or victor@wavgroup.com.

WAV Group research operates with the support of many of the nations largest real estate brokerages, franchises, Multiple Listing Services, REALTOR® Associations, and technology vendors in the US, Canada and Europe. WAV Group has expertise in the areas of strategic planning, technology evaluation, product development, market research, recruiting, sales & marketing plan development, technology selection and implementation, and Training.