

Workplace Basic Skills: Developing opportunities for staff and your company

Contributed by Jeff Burkhart, Executive Director, Literacy Network

Do you have good employees who seem to need a little extra help with reading and writing to make them even better on the job? Those employees who have problems reading and communicating in the workplace may contribute to lower productivity, have higher accident rates, or may show a lower product quality than other employees. Some employees may require more hands-on assistance from their supervisors and may contribute to higher operating costs.

The workplace programming at Literacy Network won Wisconsin Literacy's 2007 Outstanding Achievement in a Workplace Literacy Program for our collaboration with UW Hospital. The manager at one workplace basic skills program wrote: "He is a wonderful employee and this only enhances his skills and communication. His sister is also eager to attend when the next session begins. Thanks for all your assistance with this program. It certainly is wonderful and a huge benefit for us!"

By mastering literacy and language skills that produce clear, tangible, and more immediate results in job performance and job prospects, workers are more likely to see the value of developing and practicing literacy skills on a regular basis. They will master those skills more quickly and retain and develop them more fully because the skills are developed in greater context.

Literacy Network has collaborated with many employers to jointly develop workplace education programs. We conduct needs assessments, create customized curricula, and organize effective worker education programs. Your internal experts who know the workplace and the workers to be served by the program and can shape the content of the program to ensure its relevance. We work with employers to keep the program on track, identifying a good time to hold classes, identify classroom space, and invite guest speakers to the program.

With a job-specific basic skills training focus, employers will see significant gains in productivity, job satisfaction and competitiveness.

Benefits for Employers

Workplace Safety: Reduce the risk of injury with employees trained to identify hazards.

Increased Productivity: Gain efficiency when workers better understand instructions.

Improved Morale: Foster company loyalty and retention by building confidence.

Promotion: Develop employee potential to qualify for positions of more responsibility.

Benefits for Employees

Increased Job Satisfaction: Feel safer and more confident at work.

Opportunities for Advancement: Increase job security or earn higher wages.

Enhanced Quality of Life: Use language skills learned at work to improve life at home and in the community.

Literacy Network offers:

Flexible scheduling: Morning, afternoon, and evening classes

Detailed assessment of the workplace environment: On-site task analysis, needs assessment and coordination with management personnel

Initial assessment of employee ability level: Accurate placement in program sequence

Customized group instruction: Small class size for individual attention and results

Materials: Student workbooks, personal workplace dictionaries and certificates of completion

Evaluation: Student progress and program outcome reports

To discuss how Literacy Network's workplace services can contribute to your bottom line while improving your employees' lives through literacy, please contact Jeff Burkhart at (608) 244-3911 or email jeff@litnetwork.org.