In-house training programs are valuable tools. They increase the success, productivity, and motivation of your employees – and, thus, of your organization as a whole. Here are suggestions to pave the way:

**Get them there.**

There are few things more discouraging than trying to present to a nearly empty room – and it sends a negative message to those who do show up. Use the three-step approach:

*When you invite people to the training – and again when they sign up – stress the importance of their commitment.* Urge them to make attendance a high priority. If things change and they can’t attend, ask them to cancel in advance so you can offer their seat to another person.

*Confirm people’s attendance in writing* with all the relevant details of day, date, time, and what benefits they can expect to receive from attending.

*Re-confirm* about 72 hours in advance.

The result? Your “no show” rate will be almost non-existent.

**Arrive early.**

The physical set-up is an essential ingredient to the program’s success. Arrange early enough to make sure that the room is set up the way you need it to be. Check such details as these:

*Arrange the chairs* the way you want them – in classroom-style, in a horseshoe, or whatever will work best for the number of participants. Provide seats only for the number of people you’re expecting. If you’re unsure how many are coming, underestimate. You can always add more. You want to avoid empty seats.

*Inspect the lighting.* Do you want the shades open or closed? Are there any burned-out bulbs that need replacing?

*Adjust the temperature* if necessary. Keep it on the cool side to keep people alert. Around 68 degrees is preferable.

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*“Leave judgment out of the room.” – Donald E. Wetmore*
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Make sure the equipment (overheads, slide projectors, sound, microphone, flip charts, and the like) is all there and operable.

Have adequate supplies (enough handouts, extra flip pads, notepads, pencils, pens, spare bulbs for the overhead, replacement batteries for the microphone) at hand.

Check that the room is clean, inviting, and empty of debris.

Start with an overview.
Tell people what to expect. Inform them of the ending time, how you prefer to handle their questions, and, in one sentence, what you hope they’ll accomplish in the program.

Ask them to be totally there.
Encourage people to set aside their other issues for the duration of this program. Ask them to be there mentally and emotionally. Direct their focus to what the program is about. Ask them to leave judgment out of the room and let the ideas come in. No matter why they came, they’re spending their time, a portion of their lives. They owe it to themselves to get some value in return.

Begin and end on time.
If you start the program late, you punish those who were on time. If you go beyond the scheduled ending time, you’ve violated your contract with your audience, and their attention will shift from the presentation to the breach of contract.

Always respect people’s schedules and commitments. (Certainly make yourself available after the program for individual attention, but end the formal program when you promised you would.)

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Create a Learning Environment
For more on developing a culture of learning in your organization, see these articles at NonprofitWorld.org:

- How to Present Training Workshops that Educate and Inspire (Vol. 29, No. 4)
- The Nonprofit Executive as Chief Learning Officer (Vol. 16, No. 2)
- Using Training Strategically to Build Organizational Capacity (Vol. 14, No. 4)
- Board Problems Reflected in Training Requests (Vol. 33, No. 1)
- Training Programs Need More than Good Information (Vol. 21, No. 2)
- To Be an Ingenious Leader, Take Charge of Your Learning (Vol. 37, No. 3)
- Why You Absolutely Must Train Millennials (Vol. 37, No. 3)