

## Tips to help employees engage in upgrading activities

For a person to admit that he or she needs to improve his or her skills takes courage. He or she may fear the outcomes of failure, be concerned about confidentiality, or may not be aware that a learning program could help to build needed skills.

As an employer, manager or supervisor you may have to take the initiative. This can be difficult if you are unsure of how to broach this topic with your professional drivers.

This section outlines suggestions to support and motivate employees to participate in upgrading opportunities. You will find:

1. Why professional drivers may not be participating in learning activities
2. Things to consider when discussing upgrading with employees
3. Tips to get professional drivers to consider and participate in upgrading
4. A sample learning plan

### 1. Why employees may not participate in learning activities

The following barriers are cited as preventing people from getting involved in learning, whether it is in the workplace or in their communities:

- low self-esteem as a result of previously negative experiences with learning
- fear of failing, or lack of confidence in their ability to take part in a group
- feeling that learning is for “other people” but not for them—inability to recognize themselves as “learners” despite what they have learned through life’s experiences
- adults who have left school with few or no qualifications may not feel good about returning to learning
- worry about the stigma attached to adult and workplace literacy programs

### 2. Things to consider

- **If professional drivers are not confident in their skills, they probably do not want others to find out.** Often they have coping strategies to avoid drawing attention to themselves. They may feel embarrassed and want to avoid being singled out. Drivers may feel intimidated when people in a position of authority ask questions about their skills. This may prevent them from speaking about themselves and their needs.
- **If professional drivers do not feel safe or think their jobs are at risk they will not discuss their learning needs.** They need assurances that you support workplace learning as a whole and are not singling them out.
- **Learn about local upgrading resources in your community.** Call or meet with a representative from your local college and school board upgrading and family literacy

programs to discuss the types of programs they offer. It is important to know this information.

- **Build learning plans into performance reviews.** Discussing learning opportunities during performance reviews is less threatening to professional drivers. Keep discussions positive. Discuss resources and the supports you can provide.
- **Build from employees' strengths and abilities, not their weaknesses.** Focus first on drivers' current strengths and abilities. Ask about their activities and hobbies outside of work. Ask about their interest in training. Use the information you gathered to discuss the benefits of improving their skills.
- **Ask about their familiarity and impressions of adult training or English as a second language (ESL) programs.** Employees may have different misconceptions and feelings about these programs. Keep their answers in mind when sharing information about adult programs.
- **Be sensitive to employees concerns when discussing skills training.** Let professional drivers know that the information shared is confidential, and make sure it is. Assure them that the goal is to help them.
- **Build a culture of learning.** Refer to the "Building a learning culture section" on this website. Developing a culture of learning builds trust that you are seeking to support employees.

### 3. Tips for supporting employees to participate in upgrading

- Talk about reading, document use and math skills at every opportunity such as staff meetings and training sessions to normalize it.
- Share how you would like to improve certain skills.
- Discuss the reading, document use and math skills requirements of a job and what supports you can offer to help attain them.
- Promote local upskilling programs and other types of support that you can offer. For example, include information in company newsletters and other communication tools. Put up posters and distribute brochures that promote learning, local programs and resources in the lunchroom and other common areas.
- Allow for time away from work, or flex time if courses are during work hours.
- Offer financial support (cover some course costs, provide a small loan or wage advance) for course fees.
- During one-on-one meetings such as performance reviews make statements and ask questions that are open ended such as:
  - I have noticed this.... or I am concerned about....

- How can I help you?
- Is there something you need or do you need help with this?
- Let's look at some possible solutions
- Are you familiar with upgrading and ESL programs? Would you be interested in these programs?

Use the discussion to help build their learning plan.

## 4. Sample Learning Plan

### Individual development plan

Name:	
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<b>Learning goals for the coming year</b> What do you want to achieve?	<b>Knowledge, skills, abilities to be developed</b> What will you learn?	<b>Learning activity</b> What are the best activities to help you to learn? Where will you go to achieve your learning goal?	<b>Resources</b> What resources do you need – time, funds, help form others, etc.?	<b>Date for completion</b>
<i>Goal 1</i>				
<i>Goal 2</i>				
<i>Goal 3</i>				

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Manager's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

(For the back of the learning plan)

### **Employer's responsibility**

- Complete a performance evaluation and learning plan with employee
- Help employee to identify short and long-term learning objectives
- Refer employee to appropriate learning resources
- Follow-up with employee to show interest
- Provide constructive feedback (e.g. progress made, areas for improvement)
- Support, encourage and motivate employee
- Maintain mutual trust and respect
- Maintain confidentiality

### **Employee's responsibilities**

- Identify clear goals and objectives
- Work to achieve learning goals
- Seek help and guidance from the employer
- Remain open to suggestions and opinions
- Accept responsibility for decisions and actions
- Carry out tasks and learning activities as agreed