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Professional Development



Business owner's guide to learning new skills



Small business owners have to wear many hats. In addition to providing services or developing and marketing products yourself, you have to manage other employees or contractors, handle accounting and invoicing, and communicate with investors or clients.

As a small business owner, you can delegate or contract out some tasks, but you are involved at some level in every aspect of daily operations. These responsibilities require a broad range of skills and knowledge. While you sometimes gain experience through trial and error, it is also possible to have a professional development plan that will help you learn the things that you need to know to succeed in your business.

Most people think of professional development as something that benefits corporate employees. However, there are also courses, classes, seminars, and professional associations that can help business owners develop specific skills that can improve their business prospects or help with a particular aspect of running a company.

If you list what you do every day as a small business owner and then look at professional development course offerings, you will likely see some overlap and opportunities to learn new skills to help streamline your daily duties. Here is a look at the benefits small business owners can enjoy if they pursue professional development opportunities.



Improved job satisfaction

Studies have linked professional development to overall job satisfaction. While most of the research focuses on employees, this particular benefit of professional training can extend to owners, as well.

Professional development can assist you in your journey toward your career goals, which can lead to a sense of accomplishment whether you work for yourself or someone else.

Also, owning a small business can be stressful, but training in specific areas can give you the confidence to handle different types of business tasks. Building your confidence may create less stress so you can focus on the aspects of the business that you enjoy.

Increased employee satisfaction

If you oversee employees, professional development can help you become a stronger leader. Training can help you deal with new challenges, become aware of workforce changes in your field and introduce you to new ways of thinking and working with others.

Trust in management is an important factor for worker satisfaction. In other words, your employees need to be confident in your abilities to lead the company. If you are uncertain about a specific aspect of your business, employees may be able to tell. Your professional training efforts can help you hone your skills in specific areas so that you feel more secure in your decision-making and leadership capabilities.



Increased performance and productivity



Professional development can help enhance productivity and create a culture of ongoing improvement and performance in the workplace. This is true for employees and business owners.

Ongoing training courses allow you to work on areas where your performance may lag. If you successfully build your skills through development courses, you can improve your performance overall. This progress can also increase your overall productivity because you should spend less time working on tasks where your skills are not as strong.

New tech tools, procedures, and advances are changing many industries, so undertaking professional development courses that train you on cutting-edge trends and tools can also help your company perform better.

Personal and professional growth

Professional development goals focus on your career and workplace. For example, you want to attain specific skills that can help you run your business better. In many ways, professional development and personal growth build on each other. Personal development means honing the skills and traits that can help you succeed in life, in and out of the workplace.

For example, confidence in your opinions, instincts, and company vision are important qualities if you own a business. The ability to learn from mistakes, work on flaws, and tenaciously continue on despite previous failures are also essential both in and out of the office.

Professional development classes can give you specific skills that can help you build confidence, decision-making, and overall performance improvement. These courses can complement your efforts to improve your mental outlook and develop personal traits that you can then apply to business situations.



Professional development opportunities for small business owners

There are different ways to pursue your professional development goals. Classes, courses, industry certifications, and postgraduate degrees might be the most obvious option, but you can pursue other opportunities depending on your industry. For example, trade shows, conferences, and professional associations offer chances to learn from peers, attend lectures from industry leaders, and get hands-on experience with the latest tools and techniques in your industry.

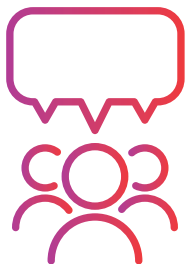


ONLINE COURSES

Classes and online courses can provide the most straightforward way to learn a new skill. For example, if you want to manage your company's Facebook and Twitter accounts, you can sign up for a social media marketing course.

These courses also easily document your progress. They can give you a way to quantify your development, and in some industries, they can help you earn industry certifications or licenses.

Professional development courses are geared toward students who are already working and have a limited amount of time. On-demand, weekend, or condensed professional development classes are common formats. These options allow you to learn the skills you need to grow your business without having to pause your business.



CONVENTIONS AND TRADE-SHOWS

A convention or trade show is a meeting that includes the leaders in an industry. If you attend these events, you can hear lectures from these people and gain new insights that can help you make operations and strategy decisions.

Trade shows give you a chance to interact with your peers and other business owners – to learn about new techniques, tools, and strategies to support your business.

These events offer a less formal form of professional development. However, they are a great place to meet industry leaders. In addition to getting their insights, you may also be able to make personal connections and form relationships with professionals who could advise you about how to pursue your professional development goals.



PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

More than 80 percent of professional associations offer some form of professional development. Even if they do not offer training themselves, associations may have a list of approved courses. This can be helpful if you are unsure about the quality of professional development options.

While professional development may often be thought of as something to support employees, small business owners can also benefit from having a professional development plan and specific goals to improve their performance as business owners and leaders.

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